

LIFE'S CONTRASTS.

BY SUSAN B. MURRAY.

MAY WESSON, even in childhood, was endowed with a rare and exquisite beauty, that charmed the eyes and attracted the regard of all who looked upon it. To this radiant loveliness of face, this glowing fairness of complexion, those liquid eyes of blue, those sunny gleaming curls, were added an indescribable gracefulness of undulating motion, and a wondrous power and mobility of expression.

In those early days her whole being was encircled by its appropriate atmosphere—that of an entire and unceasingly watchful love. Her father was a wealthy farmer—a man of education and refinement, who prized intercourse with nature far above the conventionalisms and falsenesses of life among the great aggregates of humanity—a gentleman in the true and literal sense of the term. Her mother was a woman eminently fitted for her sphere—an intelligent practical housewife, with brain, and eye, and hand equally alert throughout the entire realm over which she held sovereignty; yet able, by means of an admirable system, which governed all her household operations, to appear in the presence of her frequent guests, and always at her stated periods of rest and recreation, with that graceful repose which characterizes the true lady. The daughter of a New England clergyman, as distinguished for his learning as for his piety, she had been well and

thoroughly educated; and in connection with her husband, had instructed her children at home, in all the rudiments of knowledge. Her sons had been prepared to enter upon a collegiate course before leaving the parental roof, and her daughters needed nothing to perfect them in education (according to common and conventional ideas), except the year's tuition in modern accomplishments, which they were sent to a neighboring city to obtain.

May was many years younger than the other children of the family; and the household would have been left desolate without the joyous light of those voices which the harsh tones of sorrow had never rendered discordant, had she not remained, when they all were gone, to delight the eyes of her parents with her radiant beauty and winning grace, and to cheer their hearts with her loving ways. She had ever been the pet of the household, concentrating around her its whole mighty aggregate of affection, but the time came when the names of her young sisters were spoken in grief-broken tones, or with the tender reverence that follows into the tomb the memory of the beautiful early dead; and May was left the one daughter of her bereaved parents.

A fearful and fatal epidemic had entered the boarding-school where May's elder sisters were residing. Both were seized by its

symptoms, and before their agonized parents could answer the hurried summons to their bedside, one was dead, the other fast sinking toward the same fatal consummation.

Scarcely were these young forms laid beneath the green sod of the little family burial-ground, when the elder son came home to die. An ardent and enthusiastic scholar, he had laid the foundation of premature decay, at college, by his unceasing devotion to books. While studying his profession his efforts had never been suffered to relax, though he was constantly warned by his failing health. At length, just at the completion of his studies, when the honorable career of a long life seemed bright before him, he sickened and, with strength turned to utter weakness before the inroads of his long-hidden disease—consumption, he saw all his hopes vanish as Death beckoned him toward the grim gates of the grave. Months of lingering suffering followed, and then the hour of release came, and another green mound was heaped above the stilled heart in the hillside enclosure where the young sisters already lay.

May's only surviving brother returned to the home of his childhood at this period. Graver and less enthusiastic than the brother he had lost, he had yet marked out for himself a career which he would have followed with the persistent perseverance that belongs to deep silent natures like his, but he quietly sacrificed his inclinations, and the wishes that had grown to be a part of himself, upon the shrine of duty. Sorrow and bereavement had done the work of years, and his parents, while yet not far down the declivity that ends at the graveside, had become suddenly aged, and were bent beneath a premature feebleness. They needed the comforting presence of their son, they needed his affectionate care, they needed the sustaining power of his strong young manhood.

Robert Wesson gave up his scientific investigations, and went home to cultivate his father's acres, and to live where it was right that he should live; and being well assured that his course was right he soon ceased to lament his sacrifices. He found pleasure in the life to which they led him. Even his powerful mind found employment, if not sufficient for its entire capacity, yet enough to keep the rust of idleness from gathering upon it. And what was better

far, as his heart was fed and nourished by the affectionate natures amidst which he dwelt, and it awoke from the torpor which had grown upon it amidst the inanition of his student-life.

He conversed and read with his father and mother, he superintended the culture and improvement of the large farm, he took upon himself the education of his little sister, whom it was resolved never to send to school, and he found himself abundantly occupied, especially when he had added to his pleasant employments the long ramble over hill, and field, and by brookside, with the scientific friends who frequently visited him.

Thus passed several quietly happy years in the old homestead. The parents, with hearts divided between the living and those who had passed away, awaited death with calmness as that which should be at once the signal of short separation and eternal reunion. The years glided on so quietly that no change marked their flight, save that wrought in the young May, whose lovely childhood expanded gradually into a beautiful womanhood, and the statelier gravity of Robert's earnest mien, and the occasional silvery monitor among his dark locks to tell that he had reached the height of his years, and had already commenced the descent.

When May was seventeen her mother died, and the daisies had blossomed but once upon her grave when her husband followed her; and thus the lives that had blended together through years of joy and sorrow were not long divided. It was as if the patient loving wife ventured first into the dark valley which all must tread alone, and stood upon the thither brink of its mighty river, waiting for him from whom not even death could sunder her loving heart. Robert Wesson and May were left alone in the homestead. Their lives passed on with the usual monotony during the winter months that followed the death of their father, but with the summer came several of Robert's ancient college friends. With the desire to cheer his sister's loneliness, he had invited one of those friends to bring with him his sister, and at the same time wrote to a distant relative, a widow, asking her to come and assist May in doing the honors of the house to her guests. Mrs. Paige very gladly accepted the invitation, for a narrow income had long compelled

her to uncongenial associations and a poor home, which she was quite willing to exchange for good society and the luxuries of wealth.

Robert thought he was doing his sister a service in making these arrangements, while for himself he would from habit have infinitely preferred the uninterrupted society of his male friends. It is to be feared that May did not duly appreciate the sacrifice which her brother had made. She stood greatly in awe of Mr. Scott, who was violent in temper, and arrogant in manner, and whose "specimens" in the form of hideous reptiles and impaled bugs were the terror of her life during all his visits. Some portion of this awe she felt, in anticipation of his sister, for, at the very least, she thought it impossible for one so nearly connected with this disagreeable man, to possess any winning qualities. But all parties were agreeably disappointed when Miss Scott arrived. Mr. Scott always travelled in his own carriage, a queer vehicle contrived expressly for use in his scientific excursions, to convey his apparatus of various kinds, and the boxes of specimens which he was constantly accumulating. Miss Scott, who had no other escort, had for once consented to accompany him, and out of the midst of packing-boxes, and geological hammers, and other scientific lumber, where a chaise seat had been placed for the occasion, he helped her to descend before the porch of Wesson Farm.

Had Miss Scott been one whit less graceful and self-possessed, May, who in her capacity of hostess stood upon the porch waiting to receive her, could not have repressed the smile that threatened to merge into merry laughter. But the lady stepped down with quiet ease, and received the welcome of the young mistress of the mansion with a dignity that seemed to assert her superiority over all accidental surroundings or appliances.

With the same air she followed her hostess to the chamber which had been prepared for her, and rejecting all offer of service, with a manner that amounted to a dismissal, she was shortly left alone.

Then she sat down to think, and a change came over the dark beauty of her face. For Beatrice Scott was very beautiful, with a weird, or rather as her enemies, of whom she had many, were wont to say, with a diabolical beauty. None over whom she

threw the spell of her influence ever escaped her—though in agonies of penitence or remorse they cursed, they followed her.

She had noted the flitting and suppressed smile with which May had witnessed her descent from the carriage. From that instant she hated her, and the object for which she had consented to come to Wesson Farm had been more firmly decided upon, as a means, at least, of revenge. A mocking light glittered in her dark brilliant eyes as their glances followed May from the room, and when she had carefully secured the door, and listened to the tread of her light footsteps along the corridor and down the staircase, she allowed a derisive laugh to burst from her lips. Leaning her head upon her hand she thought deeply, until the striking of the clock upon the mantel reminded her that it was time to prepare for dinner. Then she arose, murmuring, "Yes, yes, that will do admirably, though I wish he were not so stiff and priggish, and were a shade more presentable." And with the same derisive smile upon her features, she rapidly but skillfully performed the duties of her toilet.

When Miss Scott entered the parlor, where the guests were assembled awaiting the summons to dinner, she had never appeared more radiantly beautiful. At dinner, when she was seated beside her host, she delighted him with a display of graceful wit, that while it charmed, compelled him to pause more than once in wonder, and aroused a slight mortification as he detected the rust that had gathered upon his own colloquial powers. Perhaps Miss Scott read this latent feeling, for she adroitly led the conversation to topics connected with his favorite pursuits, where the disadvantage was soon lost. On these, as on all subjects, she conversed well and fluently, adopting the nomenclature so well, and using her knowledge to such good advantage, that the superficial nature of her acquirements was not easily detected. Every one was charmed with Miss Scott, and those of the guests who had met her before, took blame to themselves for previous ill judgments, and decided that she had never appeared so well, or so truly womanly, as in the narrow circle of this country home.

In truth, she exerted all her fascinations on that first evening. She well knew how important are first impressions, and she made them, strong and deep, as she con-

versed with all, by turns grave or gay, witty or with a soft half-expressed sadness of tone and mien. But when she was again in her chamber, the mocking smile returned to her face. Standing before her mirror, clad in her long white dressing-gown, her face looked ghastly pale. She lifted the heavy masses of black hair from her temples, and bound them back so close as to leave the broad brow exposed. Then she bent forward, and by the strong light of the wax candles that burned in the brackets on each side of the old-fashioned toilet, she traced in the clear mirror the lines of thought, and care, and passion, which in that hour of self-abandonment, seemed to make Beatrice Scott ten years older than she had appeared but an hour before, when surrounded by a charmed circle of listeners in the parlor.

When she had gazed a time, she brought her desk, and taking out materials sat down to write. There was a fixed and painful expression upon her face, that told of a decision made of a will strong enough to triumph over feeling, and to trample even upon her own heart. The letter she wrote was long, and need not all be given here. But one paragraph more immediately elucidates her purpose, and may claim a place:

"Of course, dear Walter," she wrote, "you attach no meaning to my jesting words the night we parted. If even you were in an earnest mood, which I have so little vanity as to doubt, you should have known that Beatrice Scott was no wife for you. Neither of us could do a more foolish thing than speak such words in earnest; and to prove to you what my feelings really are, I will now disclose the object which brought me to this farmhouse where I am now staying. Wesson Farm is the property of Robert Wesson, a bachelor of forty years, and who looks even older. He is a man of wealth, a gentleman by birth, and a scholar; and, indeed, but for his modesty, would hold a distinguished place among men of science. Wesson Farm is more like an English manor house than an American farmhouse. The wealth and taste of its former and present proprietors have been lavished upon it, and it is, in fact, a most picturesque and comfortable residence. And—now I come to the gist of my letter—I intend to become its mistress. Do you understand? I shall be the wife of Robert

Wesson within six months? Then you shall be our favored guest, and I will cease to rely upon my powers of cajolery and fascination, and all the diabolical capacities with which you confess that you believe me endowed, if you do not, within another year, obtain the hand of May Wesson, the beautiful sister of my husband—that is to be and the heiress of no inconsiderable fortune. What say you—will you cease your pursuit of Beatrice Scott, whom you know so well that I wonder continually how you can love her, and let her marriage be the stepping-stone by which you can climb into a position beside the heiress, May Wesson. Write at once, and tell me if you join in the compact—for you have something, even now, to do to aid my plot, and which I will disclose to you anon."

Much more she wrote hurriedly, frantically—as if in haste to put her determination beyond her power of retraction—then, without reading what she had penned, she sealed up the sheets, and directed the letter to "Walter Storrs, Philadelphia." She laid the letter beneath her pillow, and extinguishing the lights, lay down, not to sleep, but to toss in burning restlessness through the long hours that yet remained of the summer night. Sleep only visited her eyelids fitfully after the dawn had stolen in; nevertheless, when she appeared at the breakfast table a skillful toilet had repaired all damages to her complexion, produced by her vigil, and not even May herself seemed fresher than she, as she smilingly and gracefully returned the salutations of the assembled guests.

May was less at ease. With the instinctive repugnance that pure and childlike natures feel for those who are evil, she shrank from Beatrice Scott. The feeling that repelled her from the side of her visitor was undefined, even vague, but too real to admit of a doubt of its existence. She could not join Mrs. Paige's praises of Miss Scott, nor respond to her brother's few words of grave commendation. A dim presentiment of evil hung over her, and oppressed her usually healthy spirit with a morbid gloom. She wished to force herself from Miss Scott's presence, but saw no opportunity of escape.

We would not dwell upon the evil arts of a vile and unprincipled woman. It is enough that she triumphed, as the unscrupulous so often do. The object was accom-

plished, and the next Christmas saw her installed mistress of Wesson Farm.

May had suffered much since the announcement of her brother's contemplated marriage, yet she had not dared to confide to him her vague fears. He was so much older than herself, so much wiser, and, above all, he was so much in love with the first woman who had ever awakened in him that passion, that May felt instinctively that her remonstrance would be vain. And so, without a word of warning, this man of noble, transparently pure nature was wedded to a woman whose whole life had been a succession of lies and vile plots; who, even at the altar, perjured herself in giving her hand to him while her heart was avowedly in another's keeping. Wesson Farm was May's home—she had no legal claim to it, for it was solely her brother's property, but neither his parents nor himself had contemplated her leaving it, except for the shelter of a husband's roof. But when a new mistress was installed there, her comforts were materially decreased, while she was daily made to feel that she was an intruder, by acts and words too closely veiled by courtesy to admit of resentment. She became very unhappy, and for the first time a cloud rested upon her fair brow unnoticed by her brother. He was too much devoted to his fascinating wife to have eyes for another.

At this period Walter Storrs was introduced at Wesson Farm. The plot worked well. Its hidden wires were held by a skillful hand. She knew the value of sympathy to a saddened heart, and she took care that May should need sympathy whenever Storrs was at hand.

He, too, knew how delicately—and with an affectation of chivalric respect and devotion—to manifest his interest in May's annoyances. He knew well when the hour came that he might hint that, if her home had become intolerable, another, prepared by loving hands, was ready for her acceptance. He knew how a young and untried heart may mistake its own emotions, and believe gratitude to be the love it simulates. Here, too, the wicked triumphed, and May became the wife of Walter Storrs. Her brother, deceived by his wife's representations both of Storrs's worth and May's attachment to him, willingly consented to the marriage, and gave his sister to the vile accomplice of his wife.

May, who had lived all her life, until her brother's marriage, surrounded by the tenderest love, soon found herself the victim of coldness that at times became even abuse. Storrs was a spendthrift and a gambler. He extorted from her her money, her jewels, everything he could convert to money for his purposes, and waited impatiently for the time when she should come in possession of her property on attaining her majority. And when that day came he scarcely relaxed his abuse, because he found that some portion of the estate was settled inalienably upon her infant heir.

Meanwhile, he kept his greedy eye upon Wesson Farm. The marriage of Robert Wesson had been childless, and the estate, encumbered only with the widow's dowry, would revert to May in case of his death. As the years rolled on, and Robert's failing health made his death seem near, Storrs's spirits rose. He had long since squandered all of his wife's fortune, and but for the small income derived from that portion settled upon their child, they would have been in utter poverty.

At this period a child was born in Wesson Farm, and scarcely had the cradle of the heir been installed in his nursery, than Robert Wesson died; and thus life and death met beneath its roof.

The widow and her child were left in sole possession of the large property, and Storrs gnashed his teeth in impotent rage as he saw the prize for which he had waited torn from his grasp. Wesson had left no will, and no portion of his property passed into May's possession. Strange as it may seem to those who have not deeply studied the nature of woman, May, who had been first attracted to Storrs only by gratitude, had learned, in the early days of their union, to love him; and through all the sorrows and trials of her life with him, had clung to him with an almost unparalleled devotion. She never opposed his desires or thwarted his wishes; not even when he proposed, soon after her brother's death, that Beatrice and her child should reside with them in the city. She shrank from the very anticipation of such an inmate as Beatrice; but even that shuddering repulsion she hid beneath her usual quiet but alert obedience to Storrs's slightest requests.

Beatrice came, and May felt that her last gleam of hope had died in gloom as she

crossed the threshold of that desecrated home. And she was right. Hitherto Storrs had manifested toward her some occasional and fitful gleams of tenderness, but, from the period of Beatrice's coming, an unvarying and contemptuous coldness marked his manner. He entirely neglected her, devoting all his time and thoughts to Beatrice, who, on her part, hesitated not to show by her triumphant manner that she well understood the position which she held.

May's health had resisted repeated trials, but under this last and worst it utterly failed. A year from the time of Beatrice's entrance into her house, she became so ill as to make it necessary to seek medical attendance abroad. Beatrice accompanied the sufferer to a distant city, and to the residence of a notorious quack, whose advertisements of wonderful cures had made his own fortune, and that of sundry newspapers. She remained with the invalid a short time, and then, on pretence of the illness of her child, returned to Philadelphia, carrying the report that she was recovering, and already convalescent. May was left to the mercy of this unprincipled and irresponsible impostor. Three weeks afterward a letter from him announced her death to her husband; and the same day the coffin containing her remains was landed in Philadelphia. There was an ostentatious funeral, and a display of mourning badges and white kerchiefs, but few tears were shed, except by the orphan girl whose only friend had departed.

By what hellish arts or devices the death of May had been compassed, none may know. Suspicion was strong among the few who knew the facts of the relations of

the parties—but suspicions unsupported by proof avail nothing. And no one had sufficient interest in the matter to seek for proofs. Everywhere, a few months later, the marriage of Storrs and Beatrice was announced; though a thrill of horror was felt by many, though the affair was made the subject of comment in the various circles of city life, another item of news—something more startling or more terrible—soon swept away even its memory. Storrs and Beatrice retired to Wesson Farm upon their marriage. They were soon forgotten in the city, and their few neighbors at Wesson Farm, though they might wonder and exclaim, knew too little of the case to do more.

There, then, they live, in plenty and prosperity. If the pale faces of the victims of their arts ever arise before them in dream or fancy, if ever the memory of those pure and loving natures comes back to them from the past in mild yet terrible rebuke, if ever the pictures on the walls of those who once dwelt there, in an aroinal atmosphere of love, look frowningly upon their fierce and blasphemous quarrels, only their own stricken consciences attest what they feel. Outwardly, they are happy and prosperous; their day of retribution has not yet come; it may never come, save in the stings of accusing conscience. But none need envy their fate. Where the wicked triumph, it is better to be the victim than the victor; better, like May, to die beneath unmerited persecution, better to starve for love or for bread, than to be the base robber who condemns his fellows to such starvation, and bears away with his prize the monitor whose voice is never silenced, and who is at once accuser and judge.

LIGHT THROUGH STONE WALL.

BY LOUISE S. DORR.

A TELEGRAM from my niece, Edith Cathard, was brought up to my room in the principal hotel at the Warm Springs, on a morning early in September.

"If you love us, come to Hawthorne Villa," was the earnest adjuration it contained. What it meant I could not guess, but felt that Edith or her sister Isla, was in some sore strait, and that I, their only masculine relative, was conjured by my love for them to come.

It may be premised in starting, that I did not believe in young ladies. A bachelor of forty-five, and something of a Bohemian, I regarded women, in general, as a fertile source of folly and mischief. For my nieces, I certainly did feel affection; but had no doubt that they were as little wise as the majority of their sex. Probably their present "difficulty," whatever its nature, arose from some feminine fatuity, for which nothing but masculine sagacity could be reasonably expected to supply an antidote.

Well, there was no help for it. My month

at the Springs must be sacrificed. Ten to one, when I reached Daleport, the *hinc illa lachrymæ* would be found a mere bagatelle. But then, there *might* be something serious, which, if disregarded, would entail ugly consequences. It was just like a woman—that blind summons—giving no hint of horns or heels to the dilemma it presupposed.

Hartz and Delamere, my companion Bohemians, had gone out to Trout Pool, lying near the Healing Springs. A spasm of indisposition, chronic with me when the question is of rising at four o'clock in the morning, had prevented my accompanying them. But to give to my sudden absconding another character than that of French leave, I determined to ride out now and bestow upon them a parting hand-shake before starting north. The Healing Springs were, and are, eight miles distant from the Warm Springs.

Under the shadow of the Warm Springs Mountain, through a region rich in varied scenic effects, I rode away. I might write a graphic description here for the reader to skip,

but luckily have not the time. In truth, if I had paid less attention to scenery and more to my horse, "It would," as the lovesick page says in the song, "have been better for me." I had gone somewhat less than half way, when my steed took a sudden fright, and immediately made an attempt at aerial locomotion. As a result of this proceeding, I was thrown headlong. My head and a rocky ledge collided. Consciousness and animation, in high dudgeon, took flight together from my belabored person. I was thus left in a very poor way, until a Good Samaritan came along and poured in, not oil and wine, but rye-whiskey. Upon this, the faculties before mentioned, afraid of losing their share of the whiskey, I suppose, came quickly back.

"You be right smart hard hit, I reckon," said my Good Samaritan, who was apple-faced and yellow-haired, like the picture of a cherub, but not otherwise cherubic in externals, though in goodness of heart he may have been.

He carried me to a cottage not far off, and gave me in charge to a pale, sharp-visaged woman, his bosom companion, and the mother of ten apple-faced, yellow-haired cherubs—mostly twins, as I judged. What with the cherubs and the woman's coddling, my bruises and uneasiness generally, I was nearly wrought to distraction before the day was done. Hartz and Delamere were to return at nightfall. I bribed the biggest of the cherubs to waylay them when night drew near, and convey the intelligence that their comrade had fallen into mishap, not because, like the three roguish chaps in the song, he "could not sing," but from inability to abide upon a steed given to the eccentricity of using his fore-feet for pawing the air, instead of locomotion.

My friends came at last. Tears were in my eyes when I saw them, but whether from joy or smoke, of which the room was full, inquiry need not be made.

"What are you lounging here for?" demanded Delamere.

"Confound it, Pynstall, I should think you were 'big enough and old enough, and ought to have known better,'" declared Hartz, looking sympathizingly from me to the cherubs, four of whom were assiduously turning somersaults on the bed upon which I was lying, while five more were engaged in the quiet diversion of stacking themselves in a pyramidal pile, each struggling for the top of the heap. The tenth, who had served as guide

to my comrades, seemed not yet to have made up his mind which division to attach himself to, but soon chose the pyramid, and, shrieking lustily, gave a new impulse to the sound of revelry.

"I'm afraid, Pynstall," observed Delamere, compelled to roar like a wild bull of Bashan in order to get a hearing, "that you may be a restraint upon the innocent gambols of our young friends here. We must get you out of this."

"I should think so," returned Hartz, skillfully dodging the heels of one of the somersaulters.

When Hartz and Delamere say a thing must be done, its accomplishment may be as safely predicted as rows at election time.

The Good Samaritan had no carriage; but he had a pair of wheels and an old dilapidated birch canoe. These were somehow ingeniously fastened together. Some bedding was lent by the mother of the cherubs, and in this mongrel conveyance I was borne away. Hartz having put his horse in the thills, rode in the prow as charioteer; Delamere came alongside upon his own steed. Their jokes upon the novel turnout ended only on our arrival at the hotel, which at present constituted our "home, sweet home."

Here my companions nursed me through a fortnight's illness, with the tenderness of true friends; but threatened every day to remand me to the cherubs, if I did not show any appreciation of their attentions by getting well. "That nautical chariot was still available," they declared, and doubted not that I was pining for another ride therein.

I had heard nothing in the meantime from Edith. Of course, with the aptitude of the sick for self-torment, I daily imagined all sorts of horrors about her. At the end of two weeks, being then convalescent, I determined to fear it no longer. Hartz and Delamere expostulated, when apprised of my intention, but I turned a deaf ear, my left one, to all they could say. Then Hartz declared his intention of going with me. The faithful fellow was quite convinced that a day's travel would make me a fit subject for dissection, but had a prejudice against such treatment for his friend. Consequently he meant to keep guard over me.

"If Hartz were not going, I should," declared Delamere, "but now I think I'll enjoy my sling here, not the Highland, a little longer."

So it was not a "girl" but Delamere, that

we "left behind," after an affectionate leave-taking. That is to say, we squeezed hands, while Delamere recommended Hartz not to coddle me too much—as if any one could outdo his own coddling of the last two weeks—and we advised Delamere to procure himself a harp, which, "from his bending shoulder decent hung," should be the "sole companion of his way."

I bore the fatigue of travel better than was expected, and Hartz soon ceased to look askance at all physicians travelling our way. In fact, as we came further north, the bracing air was giving me back my strength, so that by the time I reached Daleport I was almost a new creature.

It was with some inward quakings, that after a bath and supper at the St. Nicholas, I drove out to Hawthorn Villa, so called, I presume, because hawthorns *might* have grown within its limits, though none were ever seen there to my knowledge. It was a relief to see that outside, everything looked as usual. A servant let me in. I asked for Edith, and went on to the drawing-room. She came in presently, a tall lissome girl, with a proud, sensitive, superb face. She had grown paler since I saw her last, and her eyes looked unnaturally large. They were so beautiful, however, that there could scarcely be too much of them.

"I have come, Edith," I said, "but not so soon as I meant to."

"You have been sick, Uncle Lemuel," she observed, swiftly noting a toning down in my physique.

"Yes, or I should have been here a fortnight ago. My horse gave me a fall and landed me among the cherubs, by whom I was nearly dinned into purgatory. 'More anon,' as the paragraphists say. I hope my coming is not too late."

Her hands, which were fast locked together, seemed to clutch each other a little more closely; but she answered with perfect quiet:

"I am sorry to have troubled you. You had probably started before my second telegram was sent, or you would have known that the matter had been arranged, and that you were no longer needed."

So this is what I had come for. Yet I could not quite declare to myself that it was just as I expected. There certainly was a visible change in Edith. Something of her old buoyancy I missed, which, Bohemian as I was, and intolerent of girlish trivialities, I would gladly have seen restored.

"Where is Isla?" I asked.

"In town, spending the evening with Grace Harleigh. You do not know, I suppose, that Isla is engaged? You will remember Alston Harleigh, probably.

"Yes, an excellent match, I should say, if he is the other party."

"He is; and, as you say, it will be an excellent match. The Harleighs are a proud family, but they are all pleased with Isla. They are always sending for her, though Alston is away now for a few weeks. O, if you please, uncle, do not mention to Isla that I sent for you to come."

The request was carelessly made, but I noticed that Edith's small hands again tightened their grasp upon each other, at this casual reference to that "matter" that had been arranged without my assistance. I hate a mystery of all things, (next to a miss!) Yet I began to fear that we were going to have one in the family.

A mystery it might be, or a mere sentimental misery. Whether the one or the other, it was evident that Edith had no intention of making me acquainted with it, nor had I any authority to demand an explanation. Nominally I had been guardian to these girls, though I had mainly shirked the responsibilities of that position upon my lawyer, and now they were both of age, and quite their own mistresses.

All through the evening that followed, my perceptive faculties were upon the strain, without arriving at any conclusion. Just as I was taking leave, Isla came in. She was full of vivacity, or what the French call *esprit*, giving one the impression of never being serious long enough to have a sober thought. She took me to task saucily for my reduced bodily state, and rallied me soundly upon being so bad a horseman, after hearing the mishap that had befallen me.

"But where are those heroes and inventors, who built a car and bore you away from the cherubs?" she went on. "Their names should be handed down in our family as household words, and you do not even tell us what they are called."

"What's in a name? But theirs are Hartz and Delamere. Hartz came to Daleport with me. By your leave, I shall bring him to Hawthorn Villa to-morrow."

Edith had grown deathly pale, but Isla answered eagerly:

"Yes, bring him by all means. For Mr. Hartz, as one of the preservers of my uncle,

I must always feel gratitude; but as half-inventor of that car—adoration.”

So the merry girl rattled on, and when I was leaving warned me not to forget that I was to bring Hartz on the morrow.

I had never mentioned my nieces by name to him, but tried the sound of Edith Cathard on my friend that night, and was surprised by the sudden grip given to my hand.

“Edith Cathard your niece! And here in Daleport! Have the goodness to get sick again, and I’ll keep you in bed three months instead of weeks, to prove my gratitude by diligent nursing.”

“Perhaps you’ll begin by bathing my hand in arnica,” I said, taking a bottle from my valise. “I believe your grip has dislocated some of its joints.”

Hartz laughed, but looked rather red in the face.

“Come to the light,” I cried. “A phenomenon! You blush, by all that is glorious!”

“Don’t bring me into the Vincent Crumles family by making a phenomenon of me. By Jove! it’s warm enough here to make a ghost blush. Can you tell me the way to dreamland? I think of trying that country for a season, and advise you to go the same gait.”

I saw no more of Hartz that night, but the next day he accompanied me to Hawthorn Villa. My nieces were walking together under the maples that shaded the avenue. Just as we came in sight, Isla espied a bright-winged butterfly, a straggler left from the summer hordes, and ran off in pursuit. She had not seen us nor had Edith, but the latter discovered us a moment afterward and stopped like one paralyzed. Hartz, on the instant, left me without ceremony and bounded toward the spot where she stood.

“Found at last, my Edith,” I heard him say, a triumphant ring in his voice; but his next words were spoken with less assurance. “Miss Cathard, I fear this meeting affords you less pleasure than it does me.”

“My uncle’s friends are always welcomed here with pleasure,” returned Edith, in the quiet tones that had impressed me the previous night; tones so subdued and subduing, that I believe they would have restrained a wild Ojibwah, with the war-whoop at his tongue’s end.

Hartz immediately fell into the utterance of commonplaces, at which, on coming up with them, I assisted. But Isla soon ruffled the surface of our conventionalisms. She had

caught her butterfly, and returning back, displayed her prize in triumph.

“Will you break it upon a wheel?” I asked, after presenting Hartz to her.

“Dear me, no. I intend making a broth of it for my invalid uncle, whose sojourn among the cherubs has probably destroyed his appetite for food less light and delicate.”

“Better lay it up for your own winter’s store. You are probably accustomed to the diet, since it is said that the brain takes its tone from the food eaten.”

“Thanks, Uncle Lem; I could retort upon that to your utter confusion, if it were not for running the thing into the ground. Overgrown boys, you know, Mr. Hartz, always think it manly to despise girls. Uncle Lem has not outgrown that stage yet, but I hope you have.”

“Most assuredly I have,” replied Hartz, walking on beside her, while I followed with Edith, whom an utter weariness seemed to have overcome. Her motion was so languid, indeed, that I feared she must be ill, and offered the support of my arm.

“It is not needed, thank you. I am quite well,” she answered, exerting herself to walk more briskly. “Are you and your friend going to stay long in Daleport?”

“Some weeks, perhaps.”

A gasping sigh escaped her, showing that my answer had added to her secret uneasiness. I began to feel heartily concerned. Recollections of my bright, gay sister Miriam, the mother of these early-orphaned girls, came crowding into my mind, and impressed me strongly with a sense of duty unperformed toward her children. I determined now to gain their confidence, if possible, and so retrieve, as well as I could, my previous neglect. Busy with such thoughts, I walked on in silence, Edith probably had engrossing reflections of her own, and was as little inclined to conversation as myself. But from ahead, the sound of Isla’s mellow mirthful voice came back to us, with frequent intervals of merry laughter.

“She, at least, is happy,” broke at length from Edith’s lips, spoken not to me, but in utter forgetfulness of me.

“And you are not?” I said.

“I? O yes,” with a quick accession of color, which, however, faded rapidly.

“I feared that you were not.”

She walked on yet a yard or two, then said: “I believe I will take your arm, Uncle Lemuel, since you were kind enough to offer

it. I feel a friend's support is pleasant, sometimes, even though it be not actually needed."

"Never fear to seek support from me, Edith. I'm afraid I have been recreant to my trust, but I have not meant to neglect you."

I looked in her face to make my words the more impressive, and saw a momentary quivering of her lashes. But she answered steadily:

"You have always been very good to us, Uncle Lemuel. There is nothing for which you need reproach yourself."

And then, from a side-path, a new actor came upon the scene. This was a lean, wiry figure of a man: his head like a coffee-pot, with some necessary adaptations to the human form divine; his feet and hands three sizes too large, according to the rule of proportions; his entire self, in fact, a discrepancy, as it seemed to me. I felt Edith's hand tremble upon my arm, as, with a series of rabbit-like hops, he came up with us, and actually indulged in the familiarity of tweaking her ear. To my surprise Edith expressed no resentment, but in quiet even tones presented "Mr. Chigson."

"So this is Uncle Lem," squeaked the newcomer, his tones about as musical as those from a cracked fiddle. "Bless my life! the old man isn't half such a bear as I expected. Glad to see you, Uncle Lem. Didn't expect the honor, though, as the cat said to the bell when she found it tied to her tail. Edith, old girl, who is that just going into the house with Isla?"

"It is a friend of Uncle Lemuel," said Edith, very faintly.

"A friend! O! Mr. Anonymous, I suppose."

"His name is Hartz."

"Hartz? I go you one, now, that he's your Saratoga top-knot. The old love you were, or, maybe, weren't, off with, before getting on with the new. Give us a kiss, old girl."

"Edith, shall I kick this fellow off the grounds?" I demanded, straightening myself, and fully as belligerent in spirit as an undiluted Irishman.

"No, Uncle Lemuel," she said, submitting to be kissed by Mr. Chigson, but looking as white as the dead. "I was thinking of telling you before he came. We are engaged."

There are situations in life when words cannot do justice to the occasion; and this was one. My first feeling was of anger; my next of unbounded pity for my niece. If her manner had been happier, I might have con-

cluded that Mr. Chigson, repulsive as he seemed, was possessed of redeeming qualities. As it was, I could not believe that she had accepted this man's addresses from choice. Why then?

In marriages of convenience money is usually the compelling power, but Edith was herself a wealthy heiress. Whatever her motive, however, I could read in her white inflexible face, that she would adhere to her purpose, at any cost. Could nothing be done then to rescue her from Mr. Chigson? I would watch and wait, but her manner left me little hope.

Expressing nothing of what I felt—in emulation of him who practised similar reticence toward "the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into his bosom's core"—I allowed my hand to be shaken in a congratulatory manner by Mr. Chigson, as if I were the engaged party instead of himself, and saw a look of relief come into Edith's face when it appeared that I would accept the situation quietly.

We were at the house-door by this time. Hartz and Isla had already gone in. Edith, when upon the threshold, gave one despairing look out into the grounds, which I interpreted into reluctance to face a meeting between Hartz and her betrothed.

"It is pleasanter outside, Edith," I said. "Would you prefer not to go in?"

But if the reluctance I conjectured had existed, it was already conquered.

"That, I fear, would be rude to your friend," she said, leading on to the parlor with a resolute air, and, when we were within, introducing Hartz and Chigson as if both were everyday acquaintances.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Hartz, and wish you'd come before, as the patient said to the measles that had threatened not to come out," was Mr. Chigson's elegant greeting, while Hartz looked at him as if he were a talking pig, for whom the incongruity of speech had procured the equal incongruity of admission into good society.

Isla, too, was plainly intolerant of her sister's lover, and cast now and then a disgusted, yet searching look upon Edith, when some familiarity from the irrepressible Chigson was allowed to go unrebuked. From all that passed I inferred that Isla was, as yet, in ignorance of this previous engagement, which I thought as strange as all the rest, knowing that in former days the most perfect confidence had existed between these girls. At

any rate it would not remain a secret long, I judged, for Mr. Chigson was much too well satisfied with his position to let it go long unproclaimed.

With elements so discordant, it may be supposed that we were not a very social party. Isla's vivacity, indeed, redeemed us from absolute dullness. Yet I could see that her light spirit felt itself trammelled, as mine did, by an invisible network of restraint. Hartz strove to support Isla's efforts, but not with his usual *esprit*. Chigson talked at everybody in a jargon peculiar to himself. Edith seemed intent only upon her duties as mistress of a hospitable mansion. A generous lunch was served by her direction—an event of consequence to at least one of the party. The titillation of his palate was certainly a matter of prime importance to Mr. Chigson. When fed, he became quiet for a little while, as is the nature of animals. If Edith knew his propensities and had counted upon freeing herself so, from his impertinences, hers was a signal success. Not long after lunch was over, Isla said to Edith:

"You ought to show Uncle Lem your collection. It may shake his belief in the incapacity of girls."

Edith rose at once, a movement imitated by all but Mr. Chigson. He was stretched at full length upon a sofa, and seemed much too comfortable to be disturbed, I thought. Edith, however, asked him if he would go with us.

"Not if I can help it, as the gale said, when invited to blow a church organ on Sundays. I guess I can trust you with the old man, can't I, Uncle Lem?" was his ingenious and confiding answer.

For Edith's sake, I took no notice of his impertinence, but followed the others up stairs. The collection was ornithological, occupying a cabinet in an upper hall. The display of native birds was very fine, and these had all been stuffed by Edith, as Isla assured us, with evident pride in her sister's skill. There was also a goodly sprinkling of bright-plumaged foreign birds, procured in exchange from various correspondents. With most of the native specimens, eggs and nest were shown. They were arranged according to their classes, exhibiting a skill and intelligence highly creditable to a girl like Edith.

"You would not be like the young ladies of a school in New York, Miss Cathard," said Hartz. "A strange bird came into their schoolroom one day, to which no one could assign a name. They fled to their natural

histories, but could get no light there. Teacher was as ignorant as scholars. 'It must be some stray unit of a rare, perhaps unheard-of species.' Some one proposed calling in a gentleman of known sporting proclivities, to whom the names of all manner of fowl were as familiar as the patronymics of his familiar friends. He would not know this one, of course, but they would thus triumph in having puzzled him for once. He was accordingly summoned to the schoolhouse. All waited in breathless eagerness to hear him say he did not know the biped; but this the sportsmen did not do immediately. Perhaps he was searching in the far labyrinths of his brain for some remembrance of a bird akin to this. He spoke at length: 'Well, ladies, they are as good broiled as any way. My wife always cooks them so,' he declared with well preserved gravity. I see that instead of broiling, you have stuffed yours, Miss Edith."

Hartz touched lightly the speckled plumage of a partridge, the unknown bird of this veritable story.

Isla laughed heartily, and Edith observed smilingly, that "knowledge without observation is as useless as a carriage without a steed;" but her smile brought no warmth to her face, being rather like the glitter of sunshine upon ice, bright but chilling.

"I must show you *my* collection, now, Uncle Lem," said Isla. "No, Mr. Hartz, not you. It is only a few butterflies and a caterpillar or two, not at all worth your inspection."

She opened the door of a small room connected with the hall, shut it carefully when we were within, and said with suppressed impetuosity:

"No matter about the caterpillars and that rubbish. What does it mean, Uncle Lem? Did you see him—that big constrictor, Chigson—put his arm across Edith's chair-back? And once the vampire leaned upon her lap. And she let him! Before Mr. Hartz, too, and you. Has the snake gone crazy, and is she afraid of offending him, or what is it that makes her so strange and him so outrageously bold?"

"Do you not know? Has she told you nothing?"

"Not a word."

"How long has Mr. Chigson been coming here so familiarly?"

"I have never seen him so insultingly familiar before; but it is about a month since he first began coming here. It was just after

Edith came home from Saratoga. I did not go with her to the Springs. The Harleighs were going to their country seat, and wanted me with them, but Edith had promised the Fentons to join their party, and they would not let her off. It was the first time we were ever separated, and it seems as if we are never coming together again as before."

"Had you ever known Chigson at all, previous to the time you speak of?"

"A very little. He was an understrapper of some sort in Mr. Dodson's law-office. I believe he claims to have been a partner, but that is too preposterous. We met him once or twice at public receptions, and he pushed his way to an introduction. I don't know how, I am sure, but he was never at all troublesome until about a month ago. Before to-day he has not been here now for four or five days, and I was beginning to hope that we had got rid of that thorn in the flesh, but it seems that it was only driven in a little deeper."

"Have you talked with Edith about him?"

"I have tried, but she always puts me down with that calm unassailable way she has got lately. So I have given that up. I believe now that I shall never speak his name to her again, though with my tow-and-fire temperament I can't be sure. I suppose I would be frank and open with her, if she would let me; but there is little comfort in taking a block of marble into one's confidence."

"What if she were intending to marry him?"

Isla stiffened into stateliness, and answered with an offended air:

"What can you think of Edith, Uncle Lem? My sister *will* marry a gentleman, at least, or carry her own family name to her tombstone."

Against this spirited declaration I had nothing to oppose, since I did not think it right to divulge what Edith, it seemed, had confided to me alone. We went back to the hall directly, where, behold a tableau! Hartz was clinging to Edith's hand, uttering an impassioned remonstrance, and Mr. Chigson standing upon the stairs, his head, from the eyes up, above the upper floor, glaring furiously upon the pair. Edith saw neither him nor us, as she replied, in tones that trembled slightly despite her strong will, to Mr. Hartz's appeal.

"You must allow me, Mr. Hartz," she said, "to be my own judge of what is best

and right for me to do. You say 'consider,' as if it were probable that I have not considered. I have, and my mind is fully made up. I expect opposition, and am prepared for it. People will look upon the outside and condemn, forgetting what One has said, 'Judge not.' Forgive me if I cause you pain, and pray leave me."

"Why don't you pitch into him?" came in squeaking angry tones from the stairs. "Dang it, old girl! why don't you go for him? Look here, now, Mr. Half-a-Dozen Hartz, more or less, as the case may be—"

A blue pallor overspread Edith's face, but she moved quickly towards the stairs, and said, in her peculiar tranquillizing tone:

"Mr. Chigson, shall we go down now? Take care, Mr. Hartz, that gun is loaded."

Her warning had come too late. Hartz, catching at the first thing in his way, as some people will when overtaken by sudden confusion, had got possession of the shot-gun used by Edith in foraging for her collection. According to the invariable practice of loaded guns when handled carelessly, this one went off, lodging its contents in his side. Edith sprang towards him with a sharp cry.

"Serves him right," squeaked Mr. Chigson, with evident satisfaction.

I caught up the empty gun, and might have committed an assault and battery upon Mr. Chigson's person, but Edith's hand, resting lightly upon my arm, brought me to my senses. She was supporting the wounded man now upon one side, and Isla upon the other; but Edith quickly gave up her place to me. She had by this time perfectly regained her equanimity.

"Mr. Chigson," she said, with calm decision, "you will help Uncle Lemuel carry Mr. Hartz into the buff-chamber. Isla, have the goodness to send Jerry for Dr. Collops; and ask the housekeeper to have a room prepared for Uncle Lemuel. He will stay here at present, to help take care of his friend."

Everything was done just as she directed. Mr. Hartz was removed to the buff-chamber, and given in charge to me. He was pretty badly hurt, and there seemed to be no heart in the man to stimulate his recovery. Deliver me, henceforth and forever, from again standing in a Florence Nightingale capacity to a man who, on his own part, is nursing a disappointed love. Edith placed everything in the house at my disposal for the patient's benefit, but did not herself come near him.

Isla, however, sometimes relieved me at my post, and now and then drew me outside for brief confidences on the vexing subject of Mr. Chigson. She had learned at last the true state of affairs, and was in dire rebellion against her proposed brother-in-law. Warm words had passed between her and Edith, or rather, I believe, the warmth was all on Isla's part, and an estrangement was growing up between the sisters.

"It is only her money that he wants," said Isla, in one of our many conferences. "I would give him all mine willingly, if he'd take it and not trouble us again. Do you suppose he would, if I made him the offer?"

"Probably not. He wants money, no doubt, but he wants Edith too. I don't so much wonder at that, but the Gordian knot with me is that Edith should want him. Do you think she may have committed some grave indiscretion which is known to him, and gives him a hold upon her?"

"I don't believe that Edith ever committed an indiscretion in her life. She has been the wisest mistress to me—sister, friend and counsellor, all in one. It breaks my heart that I must lose her so; but I can't tolerate that anaconda, even for her."

At last my patient began to mend. I thought it the best thing he could do under the circumstances, and told him so, adding a recommendation from Macbeth—that "if 'twere done, why, then, 'twere best it were done quickly."

"By Jove, I believe you are right!" returned Hartz, smiling feebly. "I have been sadly troublesome, I fear, but I mean to give my mind now to getting well."

"I begin to have hope of you. In a week from to-day I shall have you out to ride," I said, encouragingly.

And I did; choosing the hour of noon, when the air is least charged with miasmatic vapors; when, too, Mr. Chigson was less likely to be about the house. Edith came out into the hall, when we had got so far, shook hands with Mr. Hartz, and congratulated him in a few quiet words upon his recovery.

"Yes," he said, "I have concluded that life is better than death, even if one only lives to suffer."

Edith sighed faintly, and leaned against the jamb of the door.

"How long will you be gone, Uncle Lemuel?" she inquired.

"About as long as Puck would be in put-

ting a girdle round the earth, according to his own bragging," I returned, giving Hartz my arm to the carriage.

Isla had been hovering somewhere near, but would not come out until Edith had retreated. Their estrangement had now reached such a point that they avoided each other when they could. So at this time the elder sister's return to the parlor was a signal for the other to come flying down to the carriage.

"Don't let Uncle Lemuel land you among the cherubs, Mr. Hartz," she recommended, laughing. Then she came close to me and uttered in a breathless whisper, "The marriage day is appointed. It is to be Saturday of this week. I overheard them talking of it last night; and I shall go away from here to-morrow."

"Do nothing rashly," I advised, feeling equal myself, however, to almost any rash thing—unless it were nettle-rash, from which I should probably have wished to be excused.

"I don't want to; but I can't stay. Do you know, I think Mr. Chigson is hurrying on the marriage, so that it may be while Hartz is in the house. He wants to parade his triumph."

"Insolent!" I muttered, flourishing the whip I held, which was very naturally taken by the horses as a signal for starting; though I had not intended it so.

I think Hartz may have guessed the nature of Isla's whispered communication, for he looked extremely miserable when the horses gave me leisure to observe him; and the only social demonstrations I could get from him were a few imperfectly uttered monosyllables. Finding this not very cheerful, and discovering, moreover, that the air outside was less agreeable than in the sheltered grounds of the villa, I cut short the drive, and at the end of twenty-five minutes was back within the precincts so lately left. But now my patient, with the unreasonableness of a child spoiled by sickness, insisted upon being allowed to leave the carriage and walk the rest of the way to the house, after a season of repose in a little grotto of rockwork and trailing vines, near the outside of the grounds. I urged the insalubrious dampness of the ground generally, and rockwork grottos in particular, at this autumnal season, but Hartz meant to have his way, and did have it. I sent on the carriage by a servant who happened to be passing, and retired to the grotto with my willful comrade. The

place was villainously damp, and inhabited by several colonies of spiders and other creeping things. The entrance, however, was on the sunny side, which made things a little more cheerful. A tangle of leafless vines falling over this formed a sort of screen, but did not exclude the sun.

"If we had the vivid imaginations of misses in their teens, I suppose we might imagine that we were enjoying this immensely," I said.

"Yes, I have seen Edith come here often."

"Now look here, young man. If you have got yourself landed here to indulge in sentimental misery, and invite a relapse—"

"A relapse of what?—gunshot wounds? Don't cry out before you are hurt. I want to study the design of this rockwork. I may have occasion to build myself a den sometime. Now, whatever you do, don't talk to me."

"I won't," I said, shutting my mouth, and presently my eyes, for I had lost a good deal of sleep lately, on account of my patient. I don't think I went fairly off in a doze, but pretty soon I heard Edith and Isla talking outside the grotto, without any knowledge of how they had come there.

"I am going to make you one last appeal, Edith," said the younger sister. "If I have seemed cross lately it was only because I am so wretched, and not because I love you any the less. Dear, dear sister, there are only you and I. If we are to be separated it will be by your own act. Do not place the hideous wall of Libbocus Chigson between us."

"I do not see, Isla dear, why he should be a wall between us. You can surely endure him if—if you choose."

"I believe you were going to say—'if I can'—I know it is endurance for you. You do not love him. He must be revolting to your refined tastes and feelings. Edith, Uncle Lem has asked me if it was possible that you could have committed some grave indiscretion known to Mr. Chigson, and had consented to marry him rather than have it revealed. I disdained the thought at first, but I have been able to think of nothing else. Edith, whatever it is, it cannot be so bad as he is. O, do please take me into your confidence! We used to be all in all to each other. I cannot bear to be so thrust into outer darkness."

"This, too!" cried Edith in a tone of anguish. Hartz clutched my arm, and seemed on the point of rushing out, but I held him firmly in his seat. "Isla, you must not

think what you have said; Uncle Lemuel must not think so. Do you not know that in marriage opposites almost always unite?"

A groan from Hartz. I wished him and myself back in the buff-chamber. At this rate, a renewal of his illness was certainly inevitable.

"Those opposite in temperament may, and should, perhaps," Isla replied; "but women of cultivation and refinement do not mate with bores. Edith, I love Alston Harleigh. I think there are few men nobler and truer than he. He is coming home in six weeks, and I count the days as they go by. But if he were as repulsive to you as Libbocus Chigson is to me, I would never consent to see him again."

"It is for you as much as for myself. O me! I believe I am losing my senses." She was silent for a moment; when she spoke again it was in the quiet tone now habitual to her. "Isla, we are talking to no purpose. You will understand me better sometime. Until then you may think anything but that I do not love you."

"Now that you have got back that tone, I know, indeed, that we are talking to no purpose," said Isla, in a sad spiritless way.

She walked off directly, and Edith began to work among the vines, removing some of the most delicate from the rockwork, and potting them for winter protection. Hartz leaned heavily against me.

"It is wearing work," he whispered, "this groping for light against a blank wall, is it not, Pynstall?"

"Don't grope then."

"You might say to one who had a difficulty in breathing, 'Don't breathe,'" Hartz retorted, dryly.

"I shall have a chance to say it to you, if you stay much longer in this moist picturesque retreat."

"Don't bother! I feel no chill, and I am not rested enough to go yet. There comes another!"

A dark-robed female figure glided by the mouth of our den, as he spoke, seeking Edith, it appeared.

"My child! my own daughter!" she cried, her voice creaking like an ungreased cart wheel in its effort to be pathetic.

"Mother," said Edith, in quivering tones, "was it well to come here?"

"I don't know. He, my benefactor, said I must not, but I could not stay away. Bad as I am, I have a mother's heart."

"The deuce you have! I wonder where you got it!" I ejaculated, under my breath.

"I did not mean to chide you, mother. I was coming to see you again soon. I think about you day and night. Are you quite comfortable in your new rooms? Do you have everything you need?"

"Yes, most everything. I was thinking the other day that some lace curtains would set off the parlor nicely, but it's no matter. I don't deserve lace curtains, I am sure."

"You shall have the curtains. You would like to hear about Isla, I suppose? She is very well, and your brother, too, Uncle Lemuel, though he has been ill quite lately. It seems hard that you cannot see them, but you yourself agree that it is best so."

"*I don't though!*" roared I, suddenly appearing before the pair. "Edith, whom does this woman claim to be?"

"Do you not know her?" gasped my niece.

"I certainly have not that pleasure, though you spoke of me as her brother, and have addressed her as your mother. There is deception at work here. Your mother, child, died years ago in the sunny South."

"It was so reported, Uncle Lemuel, but she did not die. She left my father for—another man. You were in Europe at that time, you know. Papa was too proud to have the truth known."

"Edith, my sister Miriam was as good, and true, and pure as the angels. This woman is a lie, a cheat. She knows I speak the truth."

"I expected he would disown me," whined the woman. "I told you so."

And now Hartz, whom I had abandoned summarily, appeared upon the scene.

"If this woman claims to be Mrs. Francis Cathard, Pynstall is right in calling her a lie," he declared. "Your father, Miss Edith, and mine were friends. It was while visiting at our house that Mrs. Cathard took a malignant fever and died. I was only a boy, but I remember her perfectly; a sweet, saintly, and most lovely woman—as unlike this one as possible. You have been imposed upon by a gross deception, and I think I know what villain planned and hoped to reap profit largely from the lie. There he comes—Libbocus Chigson. Have the goodness to remind him, Miss Edith, that in building of falsehoods, as of chaises,

'There is always somewhere a weakest spot,'

and at that weakest spot his has, unfortunately for him, broken down."

Edith was trembling violently, but she held the blanching Libbocus with a firm eye.

"Is it true, Mr. Chigson," she demanded, with scathing emphasis, "that this woman is an impostor?"

Libbocus pawed the ground with one splay foot, glanced at the woman, and received from her a most crestfallen nod, then turned away and made an inglorious retreat. While I was congratulating Edith, the woman also slunk away. Hartz followed me in congratulations, contriving to mix a little tender by-play therewith, which I don't intend to put upon record. Isla, who had probably seen from the house that something unusual was going on, came down to investigate. I begged to be allowed to condole with her for the loss of a brother-in-law. She looked from me to Edith, clapped her hands, and burst into tears.

"How did you do it, you darling Uncle Lem?" she asked, smiling, and crying, and fondling Edith and me all at once.

I told her how it was done.

"Dear Edith, how much you must have suffered!" she said, softly kissing her.

"I bore it, dear, for you. Partly, indeed, to save our house from shame, but chiefly for you. I knew the proud blood of the Harleighs would reject an alliance with a tarnished name, and your own, as proud, would equally spurn to humiliate them. At first I did shrink from sacrificing myself, and sent for Uncle Lemuel, in the hope that he might discover some other way. But when the time allowed me by Mr. Chigson for decision had gone by without bringing Uncle Lem, I thought it had become my duty to bear alone the cross and the shame. God be praised that the long torture is over."

"I hope, though, Isla, that your objection to a brother-in-law was specific and not general, as I think you are still liable to have one," I remarked.

"If Mr. Hartz is to be he," laughed Isla, giving him her hand, "I shall advise Edith to clear her house of firearms before the wedding day."

Without doubt this was done, for there has been no accidental shooting at the villa since Edith became Mrs. Hartz.

As for Chigson, the concluding couplet of an epitaph on Tom Paine, which I have read somewhere, will finish him:

"Where he's gone and how he fares,
Nobody knows and nobody cares."

LIGHT AND SHADE.

BY GUSSIE M. WHITMAN.

CHAPTER I.

ANDRIE BLAIR laid down her embroidery, and walked to the window.

"Perhaps a look at the bustle and cheerfulness without will rouse me from this drowsiness," she thought. A smile came to her pale lips as she spied her lively friend, Annie Dutton, tripping down the street, looking brighter and cheerier than ever, in the radiance of the winter morning; but the dull weary look saddened her face again, and she threw herself into the rocking-chair before the fire as her friend opened the gate.

Rushing in with a beaming face, Annie's salutation was:

"O Andrie! anybody would suppose you were the one who had been to the party last evening! I'm sure you look completely 'done out,' as our washerwoman hath it. Have you been losing your sleep, lately? I'm not tired a bit, although I danced the whole evening. O, what a ghost of a smile! Come out with me and take a walk in the frosty air. You never saw Eildon look as beautiful as it does this morning. The scene is soul-inspiring. Will nothing rouse you, my stubborn friend? Well, then, I'll try and sympathize with you. Now really, aint it mean; the way that Alfred Forbes is acting?"

Andrie gave a little nervous start at the name, and bent her head a trifle lower over her embroidery. Annie knelt by her friend's chair, and put her arm about her waist.

"Everybody knows how attentive he has been to you of late, and everybody is surprised to see how enchanted he is, or pretends to be, with that little senseless doll of a Sybil Earle! What a spiritless creature she is! I suppose it's all owing to her living with that dreadful grandmother of hers. She does have splendid dresses, though! They say the old lady gives her everything she wants—and that means everything she sees—and then scolds and even beats her if she does the least thing to vex her. I wonder how she ever got into our set! Why don't you wake up, Andrie Blair, and show Miss Sybil that she is mistaken in supposing she can win your cavalier from your side? Why, with one look from those flashing orbs of yours, you could make her shrink and hide away from you. I declare, if Philip King was doing as Alfred Forbes is, I would storm what little spirit that girl has, quite away. What is she, what can she ever be, compared with you? I see you don't like what I've been saying, Andrie; you think I'm too vindictive. You will sit down and

think it over, and bury it all away somewhere, and come out of the furnace quite a heroine; or you will muse over it, only to grow thin and pale, and at last die of a broken heart. Now that's not my way! When anything comes to pass that I don't like, I assert my rights directly. I'm determined not to be trodden under foot if I am somewhat diminutive in size. Do speak, Andrie Blair, or I shall go distracted!" And the excited damsel sank into a chair, and leaned back quite exhausted.

The color tinged Andrie's cheeks as she slowly spoke:

"Alfred Forbes may do as he chooses. I shall not be broken-hearted about it, I assure you. There never was anything settled between us, although we have been good friends for a long time, and if he prefers Miss Earle's company to mine, I'm sure I shall be perfectly indifferent about it!"

"That's just what I want you to say, dear. If you *don't* care enough about him to draw him back again, then show her, show them both, how far you are above them and their mean ways! I believe that old grandmother is at the bottom of the mischief. She's such an old money-getter, that if she could get Alfred Forbes for a grandson-in-law she wouldn't let the chance slip!"

Now Mr. Alfred Forbes was quite a lion among the Eildon belles; many a matchmaking mamma was secretly angling for the young gentleman who was thought to be well-to-do in the world. He *had* been particularly attentive to stately Andrie Blair; had visited the Blair mansion frequently; had often whispered sweet nothings in Andrie's ear when they were alone; little complimentary speeches, that, coming from *his* lips, made the telltale blush rise swiftly to her pale face. No wonder, then, that the thought of his giving up all this pleasant intimacy for the sake of a nonentity like Sybil Earle, should cause a little tumult within Andrie's soul, as she stood in the deep twilight alone, gazing out on the dark street that evening. Since he had proved himself to be so fickle, so changeable, should she not rejoice to be rid of him? Then would come the impetuous wave, overleaping the slight barriers just erected, "I *will not* give it up! I *know* I have had, if I have not now, *some* power over his heart; I *will* gain him back again!" Then a vision of Sybil and her scheming relative flashed across her; the old lady was wealthy; Sybil could array herself in costly

attire, far richer than Andrie could afford.

"It is her money he seeks! I detest such mercenary motives! I will blot out this page in my life's history. Thank kind Providence, I've plenty to do, and busy everyday cares shall crowd these silly emotions out of my mind and heart. But the lesson is hard to learn!"

She made a pretty picture, just then, standing between the curtains, with the firelight flickering in the background. Alfred Forbes, on his way to the boarding-house of Sybil Earle, did not relish the disturbance caused in his mind by the sight of Andrie's form and pale calm face, as he glanced hurriedly at the window in passing.

"Pooh! she's nothing to me. I'm free to act as I please!" was the answer, half-aloud, to his mental accuser. He turned his head, and passed on.

Andrie had seen him, and then and there his image was banished from the heart-temple where she had enshrined him, and placed in the outer court of complete indifference. She turned around to the cheerful scene within. Very pleasant, very homelike, was the apartment, with its pictures, books, flowers, and cosy chairs before the inviting fire. Surely here was home, with its many comforts—surely here were loved ones who protected and cherished her. All the happiness was not extracted from her life. The cheery aspect of the parlor brought a warmth to her shivering soul, a softened look to the cold face. She took the lamp from the mantel, lighted and placed it on the centre-table; then commenced rearranging the articles thereon. Cecil Blair came in with an open letter in her hand. Her clear eyes told her sister that she had heard something surprising.

"O Andrie dear! such news!" and the *petite* maiden led her to the sofa which she had just wheeled up to the fire. "Sit down here and let me tell you. I've got a letter from Jennie Rodman, Harry Rawdon's cousin, you remember; and she says there is quite an excitement in Dryburgh on account of Miss Hale's marriage to a widower whose wife had only been dead three months! I'm sure we all considered Harry and Miss Hale as good as married, when he was here last summer. It seems he knew nothing about it till he heard she was married. A fancied lack of attention, or something, displeased her ladyship; this well-to-do widower steps up and urges his suit; she accepts, is made Mrs.

Barnes immediately, and presto! poor Harry Rawdon finds himself the victim of a heartless flirt! I'm sorry, aren't you? He's a sterling whole-souled man, and I know he's worth a dozen of such as Mr. Barnes, if he is a poor mechanic!"

Cecil's gray eyes were very brilliant; animation really lent beauty to her plain face.

Andrie smiled at her little sister's excitability.

"If he knew what a warm advocate he had in Cecil Blair," she said, "he need not remain inconsolable long." And secretly she marvelled that their experiences—Mr. Rawdon's and her own—so much resembled each other.

She had become slightly acquainted with this young gentleman the previous summer; had admired his pleasant manners, his air of manly independence and his pleasing personal appearance, and she really pitied the deserted lover whom Miss Hale had so cruelly jilted.

Andrie was quite cheerful that evening. Her old flow of spirits seemed to have returned, and a new vivacity, an indescribable lightness of heart, made her cheek glowing and her laugh musical. She had determined to exert herself to the utmost to live above her troubles; to live them down; to make her life pleasant by giving pleasure to all around her. Call her experiences trifling, if you will, but trifles leave their impress on the character, and whatever helps mould our characters, whatever leads us from trusting in the unreal and unstable, to lean on the real, and true, and abiding, is not a trifle.

CHAPTER II.

ON rising ground, which sloped gradually to where the rough road skirted the river, stood a plain yet elegant dwelling-house, the abode of the Thorpe family, and the home, for the present, of old Mrs. Earle and her granddaughter Sybil. For the present, I say, for there is no knowing how soon the old lady, in one of her uncontrollable fits of anger, may give notice that she is going to leave, as she has done about a dozen times in her life. Not that her hostess is unkind, or her wants are not supplied as she could wish, for the Thorpes, father, mother and boys, are as kind, considerate and respectful as heart could require; but you do not know Mrs. Earle in the different phases that she assumes to suit her convenience. She is

naturally of a proud, overbearing, tyrannical disposition; and in consequence of having been thrown about in the world a great deal—if I may use the expression—her character has not been softened by the ups and downs of life. She is a very unprepossessing specimen of old age; not one of those dear old ladies we sometimes meet, with such placid faces and quiet ways, reminding us of a peaceful river gliding calmly down to the great ocean; she seemed a boiling estuary, seething and foaming ceaselessly.

Sybil was an orphan; small and slight, not blessed with an over-abundance of what some people call faculty; a young lady possessing nothing remarkable either in face or disposition, a perfectly harmless simple creature, never allowed to have an idea of her own, and, after a time, not caring to have any; in fact, a simple nobody.

Let us take a peep at the old lady in her apartments, situated in the front of the pleasant dwelling. All her ancient goods and chattels, old-fashioned trunks, bandboxes, bedroom furniture, etc., are piled up around the room. On a wide lounge by the window, arrayed in a flaming red flannel gown, her head bound up with a white handkerchief, reclines the guardian, and the terror, also, of Sybil Earle. Her repulsive features bear the traces of recent passion, and she is indulging in a series of loud groans.

Gentle Mrs. Thorpe, entering with kind words and smile, can scarcely quiet the irate dame.

"Where is Sybil? Where is Sybil?" she screamed. "What does she mean by leaving me this way after all my kindness to her? I say, go find Sybil, and tell her to come here!"

"She is in the parlor practising some new music, Aunt Hepsy," said the lady, pleasantly. "I can tell her you wish her to come to you. Can I do anything for you?"

"Yes, I'm cold, cold. And bring me that lavender bottle, and I think I'll take a spoonful of brandy; it's in that little trunk. Don't mistake, and give me eye-water. O my head! I don't think I shall last long! Go tell Sybil to come here! What is she practising for? I want her to come and write to Matilda Earle; and tell her to come and see me in the summer!"

One would certainly have believed, had they seen Mrs. Earle in a fit of passion, that she must be really ill; indeed she often made herself so by giving way to her terrible temper; but the suddenness with which her

mood changed to one of pleasant affability was surprising, and almost incredible.

Sybil flew up stairs with a petulant, "O dear me!" As she hurried along the hall, her grandmother rose with astonishing agility, and opened the door.

"Come here, come here!" she called, hoarsely, beckoning impatiently with her lean forefinger.

"I'm coming; you needn't hurry me so. I'm sure you look very comfortable here, and I've only been down stairs half an hour."

Sybil threw herself into the low chair before the fire, and taking a book from her pocket began to read.

"Sybil, Sybil Earle! do you hear me? I want you to write to your cousin Matilda. I want to tell her how I am used here."

"What do you mean, grandma? Why, Mrs. Thorpe is as kind as can be. I'm sure you have everything you want; you ought to, if you don't. You've got money enough."

"Hold your tongue, girl!" shrieked the old lady. And seizing a towel from the rack, she showered blow after blow upon the head and shoulders of the shrinking Sybil, spitting in her face, and screaming, "Money, money! yes, all people want is my money!" while the frightened girl flew around the room endeavoring to avoid her incensed grandmother.

"Sit down and write, directly! and then get your sewing. A pretty hand you'll be when you come to get married; can't even mend your own clothes! When I was a girl, I could do all kinds of sewing. I've worked all my life, and that's how I've got my money. You needn't think I'm going to get your clothes made for you always. I tell you I won't, *I won't!*"

"How can I ever do anything myself, when you never let me even try? And I think you needn't trouble about my getting married. Such a thing is not likely to happen very soon."

"It isn't! What's Alfred Forbes paying you attention for, I want to know?" cried the old lady, rising from her chair, where she had flung herself quite exhausted after the chase. "Why did he leave Andrie Blair, and what does he come here so often for, if it isn't to see you?"

Sybil simpered and colored, and gnawed the penholder in her hand confusedly.

"O grandma! you always set everything down for granted at once. Don't talk such nonsense, for pity's sake!"

"You must get him! He's a fine young

man. I've inquired about him, and find he has good business tact, and is likely to be well off. You shall marry him before next year at this time. You needn't mind writing that letter now. I want you to help me down into the parlor. There are some ladies coming up the walk, and I want to hear the news. Where's my black gown? I want my crape shawl, too, and my lace cap; I'm not going to stay up here all the time, I can tell them. Here, Sybil, take this purse, and buy whatever you want to wear at that party on Thursday." And Sybil, with an amused smile, hastened to obey.

CHAPTER III.

"I SUPPOSE, as you are one of the Eildon 'lions,' you will grace Mrs. Maybury's parlors with your presence this evening, Alf," said Edgar Thorne, as he threw himself lazily on the counter in Browne's grocery store, where Forbes acted the part of clerk.

"Of course, Ed; one couldn't have fortitude enough to absent himself from Mrs. Maybury's gatherings, and Eildon society can muster such an attractive corps of belles, you know, one must be quite a misanthrope indeed not to desire a sunning in the smiles of the fair ones, when the opportunity comes in his way."

"O, by the by, I heard something lately that sounded rather queer to me, considering the way you lectured me when I acted a similar part years ago! Where's that bewitching Miss Andrie, who held such a high place in your affections when I was here in the autumn? It's a new flame, now, they say, a little plain girl with a rich old grandmother. No mercenary motives, eh?" And Thorne glanced quizzingly at his friend.

"O, one must look ahead, you know. You'll congratulate me, one of these days, when you see me in business on my own account, placed on the high road to fortune by the aid of the old lady's money-bags. She's all right; think's I'm number one, and Miss Sybil, why, she's over head and ears in love with my worthless self. Don't blame me for anything; Andrie Blair was not my affianced, or I wouldn't have acted as my heartless friend Edgar Thorne did. I suppose Miss Andrie has common sense, and she'll show it. Women don't care as much about these things as we suppose. They soon forget trifles like this, get all over it, and marry some day, and then what difference does it make whether

they have been jilted thrice, twice, or not at all? Why, that little Miss Grey of yours is to be married to-morrow evening! I'll warrant she couldn't find your image in her heart anywhere if she searched a week. Jack Fletcher fills it so completely. Ha, ha!"

"Well, Alf, I've an invitation to this evening's party, and I shall carefully scrutinize Miss Andrie Blair; I'm almost certain that there will be some little nervous starting, or deadly pallor, or something of that sort, when she is near you. *Au revoir!* my fussy landlady will be coming to look for me if I'm not in precisely when the tea-bell rings."

Forbes's composure was more disturbed than he wished to own, as he attended to all necessary matters before closing the store and going home to tea.

"Pshaw! what a fool I am, to be thinking at all of— I'll propose to Sybil Earle this very evening, if an opportunity offers itself. She'll do very well; one can't expect everything in one person, and I must have money, I must have it!"

CHAPTER IV.

CECIL BLAIR was running up and down stairs in a flutter of excitement, for her own and Andrie's toilets must be made for the evening's gathering at Mrs. Maybury's. Cecil was a darting sunbeam; her mission was to run hither and thither, brightening dim nooks and corners in life's vast structure. Like the serene soul-soothing moonlight, bathing all with its soft calm radiance, was Andrie's gentle influence in her sphere. She sat before the glass in her plain white muslin, the neck and wrists adorned with a simple mingling of blue velvet and lace, holding in her white hands the azure ribbon that Cecil was to twine among the long curls she was arranging for her sister. Cecil glanced in the mirror as she stood winding the dark tresses round her fingers, and a bit of a sigh escaped her as she noted the contrast between Andrie's delicate beauty and the plainness of her own features.

"Cecil, dear, that will do very well. Why, you haven't begun to dress! Come, be quick, or you will be so hurried you will scarcely be presentable. What are you going to wear?"

"O, it makes no difference what I wear! My claret merino will do to-night. I'll never be noticed beside you. Suppose I wear my gray dress, and comb my hair down over my ears—so!" And she seized the comb, laugh-

ingly. "My face and attire would then be in perfect harmony with each other."

"Nonsense! You must allow me to be your dressing-maid now. You will wear blue and white this evening. I'm not going to outshine you, by any means."

Andrie's white robes swept around the room as she went vigorously to work, arranging puffs, braids and bows in Cecil's silky hair, and making her look charming in spite of herself.

"I'm sorry the evening is so dark and dull outside," said Andrie, glancing towards the window. "Why, I do believe it's raining!" she exclaimed, noticing drops plashing against the window. "It will be very disagreeable walking to Mrs. Maybury's in the rain."

"Very. Who's that coming up stairs in such a hurry? And I heard the front door open just now, I'm certain."

A clumsy tapping at the door brought Andrie to open it.

"Here's Mrs. Burns has come in her carriage for you and Miss Cecil, to take you to the party, seein' as it's rainin', miss," said Irish Matty. "Yer ma told her as how yer'd be plagued to go, so she's waitin' below for ye."

"Tell mamma we'll be down in a minute." And the girls seizing their outer wrappings were soon tripping down the staircase.

As they were getting into the carriage, Mrs. Burns said to the sisters:

"I've some other young people inside. I called for Mary Morton, and found a friend of her's—Mr. Rawdon—there, so we will have quite a carriage full. Mr. Rawdon, allow me to make you acquainted with Miss Blair, and her sister, Miss Cecil, and to beg you to give Andrie a seat by your side. Sit here, Cecil, between Mary and me. Drive on, John." And the energetic lady stopped to breathe.

"Miss Blair and I have met before, you must know, Mrs. Burns," said Harry Rawdon, quietly, as he helped Andrie to her seat.

Andrie knew not why, but she felt a sudden thrill at the sound of that quiet voice, and a sort of restful feeling came over her sitting there by the side of Mr. Rawdon. She sat very still, listening to Mrs. Burns's ceaseless flow of conversation as she and Mary gave an airing to almost every subject under the sun. When her friend rallied her on account of her silence, she simply said she did not feel in the mood for talking just

then, but hoped the scenes of the evening would rouse her spirits and conversation.

Seated at length, in a quiet corner in Mrs. Maybury's parlor chatting with some young married friends, she had a good view of the gay-looking beaux and belles of the village, who, full of life and spirits, were promenading the rooms, getting up dances and various games, in which the married ladies and gentlemen took part with quite as much interest as their juniors.

"I don't care for dancing just now, Mary," she said, as that gay girl came up and took her hand to lead her away; "I want to look on a little first. Here's Mr. Rawdon doing nothing, take him for a partner for somebody," archly glancing up at the young man who was standing by the centre-table idly turning the pages of an album. He smiled, and expressed himself ready to contribute to anybody's enjoyment, and Mary led him off in triumph.

Annie Dutton's countless ribbons were fluttering here and there, and must have had veritable magnetism in them, or it must have dwelt in her merry smiling eyes, for wherever she led, there Philip King seemed compelled to follow, all admiration and devotion.

Ah! here come Mr. Forbes and Miss Earle to take their places in the dance. Sybil's blue silk train glides by, and Andrie marks her blush and simper as her gallant lover bends his head to whisper some compliment. As he passes Andrie's seat their eyes meet; she looks at him steadily, bows pleasantly, and when he has passed, she looks up to see Edgar Thorne's cold hateful eyes upon her in a searching stare. "Insufferable fellow! how came he here?" she said, mentally, and a slight frown ruffled her white brow as he came forward with a smirk and a bland, "Miss Blair, I believe; I am happy to meet you."

Andrie nodded distantly and rising on the instant, proceeded to join the dancers. Harry Rawdon, at liberty just then, came forward to lead her to her place.

"How well they look together!" said voluble Mrs. Burns to a friend, as the pair passed. "Mr. Rawdon is the finest-looking young man I have seen for a long time. He's far superior to Alfred Forbes, in manners and character, too. He and Andrie Blair would make an excellent match."

Andrie could scarcely repress little quiet flashes of triumph that would leap from her eyes when they happened to encounter those

of her quondam lover. It was very pleasant to have Harry Rawdon so near, and so deferentially attentive. A deep color glowed on her round cheek as Annie Dutton archly whispered:

"You are superb, to-night, *ma chere amie*, and some one else thinks so, too, I fancy!"

They stood by the table together, examining some drawings, when Rawdon said in a low tone:

"Just glance in the direction of the sofa in the corner, Miss Andrie; isn't it a pretty tableau?"

Andrie glanced in surprise in the direction he indicated. It was indeed quite a little scene, and the sister's eyes began to be opened to something hitherto unthought of.

Little Cecil and young Mr. Leigh were sitting there *tete-a-tete*. The young man's admiring gaze was upon his smiling companion as she chatted merrily, with a rosy animated countenance. Andrie noticed a pink hothouse rosebud in Mr. Leigh's hand; she had placed it in Cecil's brown braids when she arrayed her for the party. With a laughing astonishment in her blue eyes she turned to her companion again.

"Why, I'm sure I never thought of such a thing!" Cecil is so quiet and uncommunicative. Isn't it queer?"

"O, such things will take place sometimes. I should think you would be well pleased. They are perfectly suited, in my opinion."

"It's so new and strange. I never suspected Cecil of any such transactions. What queer things transpire sometimes!"

Later in the evening Andrie passed out alone into the hall where the cool air, coming through the open door, refreshed her a little after the heat of the crowded parlors. Though it was midwinter the night was mild, and the soft rain still dropped quietly. She met Alfred and Sybil coming from the dim light into the bustle and brightness again. Sybil's inexpressive face was downcast and blushing, and Andrie caught the wooer's last words:

"I have never loved any but yourself, Sybil."

Andrie's light drapery floated by; a careless smile parted her lips as she met them, and passed on to the door, while her heart despised anew the man who could utter such a falsehood, for in the old days gone by, had she not read the tale from his glance, from his tone, if not from his very words? Had not all been radiant and serene till Sybil

Earle come back from Madam Wentworth's boarding-school?

"I will not hate her," she soliloquized, half aloud; "her little foolish heart is bound up in him, and I dare say she will be a very affectionate sort of a wife; she seems too simple-hearted ever to doubt his affection. I wonder if they will be happy."

She turned, saw Harry Rawdon coming to look for her, and hastened back to the brilliant rooms again.

Andrie's little hand trembled as she laid it on Mr. Rawdon's arm and tripped down the long steps, into the wet street, and on towards her home after the joyous evening was over. When Harry took that same little hand in his, and besought that it, with its possessor's true heart, might be his own for life and death, and Andrie's sweet eyes, beaming with joy-drops, were lifted to his as she spoke the words that sealed their betrothal, two lives once stormy, and cloudy, and troubled, were so no longer, but tranquil, and radiant, and joyful.

Andrie ran up to her room in a tremor of happiness. She had almost forgotten Cecil's existence, and was removing her wrappings, when the shutting of the front door startled her. She went to meet her sister, who was looking conscious and very pretty indeed, in her coquettish little white hood with its tiny blue tassels.

"Why, where have you been, darling, and under whose escort did you arrive safely at the desired haven?" said her sister, laughingly.

"O, I've been walking along behind you all the way," said Cecil, dropping her eyes and reddening to her temples, "and Mr. Leigh walked home with me," very unconcernedly, yet with a little tremulousness in the tones of her voice.

"O!" exclaimed Andrie, expressively, "you're a sly little puss, Miss Cecil Blair, but my eyes were opened to-night. Why, you've lost that lovely rosebud from your hair! You didn't give it away to any one as a *souvenir* of the evening, did you?" And she gave her sister a mischievous glance.

"You needn't question my doings so sharply," said Cecil, saucily, turning to the mirror and commencing to remove the ribbons from her hair. "What if I ask the cause of Mr. Harry Rawdon's devotedness to a certain young lady this evening, and also of the excited appearance of the aforesaid young lady, her forgetfulness of her sister,

and other signs of—O, nervousness, I suppose! My eyes can be opened, too, can't they, Andrie? I'm no duller of comprehension than my elder sister."

CHAPTER V.

WHAT a delightful bustle is created in a family when wedding preparations are in progress. Good Mrs. Thorpe having no daughters whose going from the parental roof could occasion such pleasurable excitement, was resolved to do her utmost to cheer the way of Sybil Earle to the hymeneal altar. Grandmother Earle had laid aside for a time, as she was capable of doing, under certain circumstances, her fits of passion and sulkiness, and to the agreeable surprise of every one, was extremely pliable and even cheerful during the few weeks preceding the wedding.

Whatever was deemed beyond the skill of the village dressmaker was ordered from the city or the neighboring town, and the old lady kept every one around her busied in doing something for her grandchild, whom she either petted and humored, or scolded and tormented.

"How old were you, Aunt Hepsey, when you were married?" asked Mrs. Thorpe's sister-in-law, who was in the little sitting-room assisting in the trimming of Sybil's black alpaca.

"I was nineteen years old, Catherine, and I should have been married when I was eighteen, only the vessel Mr. Earle went away in was taken, and he was made prisoner. You know it was the time of the Mexican war. I was all ready to be married, and was expecting my betrothed home every day, when we heard he was a prisoner. I didn't know what to do with myself, the time hung so heavy on my hands, so I made some shirts for old Mr. Earle's store, and when I was married, he gave me a beautiful white beaver hat trimmed with pink ribbon and white lace, and my father gave me another at the same time, so I had two beaver hats, and they weren't little mites of things like girls wear now, either?"

Swiftly, swiftly the days sped away, the days all golden and delicious to Sybil Earle, for were they not bringing on her bridal morn? She passed her time sitting and dreaming by the hour of a brilliant future, a splendid *chateau en Espagne* she had been building so long, or handling and admiring the various beautiful articles of her *trousseau*.

In the fair sky of her prospects she saw not even a cloud of the magnitude of a man's hand. Poor Sybil! would that she could have been endowed for but a brief season with the gift of second sight, that she might have escaped in time the storms of the future hours, destined to be so different from the joyous days of her anticipations! Her foolish little heart fluttered with joy at the reception of an elegant brooch and earrings on the evening preceding her bridal day, a gift from the bridegroom elect, and Mrs. Earle's eyes shone as she saw them, and said, exultingly:

"Well, I heard he had a good salary, and was smart in business, but I didn't think of his being able to afford such a present. Real gold too! You're a lucky girl, Sybil!" And Sybil thought she must be.

As the bride-to-be was tripping through the hall late that evening, in quest of Mrs. Thorpe, to ask about some of the morning's arrangements, she caught the last words of a conversation between the worthy host and hostess.

"They do say he is not over-scrupulous in his dealings, and I never did like the look of his eye; but it's no use saying anything now."

The talkers started as Sybil came into the room, with curious wonderment on her face, and commenced talking pleasantly to her, though she observed they seemed ill at ease.

"I wonder of whom they were speaking," she said to herself, afterward. "They could never have meant—O no! the idea is absurd! I won't harbor it for a moment." And thoughts of the glowing to-morrow chased the shadow of doubt away.

The village church was crowded with spectators on that bright December morning, and there were many to admire the timid-looking little bride, as she stood

"Bedecked in her snowy array,"

her misty veil floating softly down over the satin and filmy lace, the orange wreath on her smooth dark hair, the cluster of white blossoms in her hand. Some remarked the pale face and restless eyes of the bridegroom; and wondered why he appeared so gloomy, so forbidding, on such a happy occasion. Andrie and Cecil were among those who witnessed the ceremony; for what cared Andrie now? Had not the past year been full of brightness and gladness? Had not Harry Rawdon, who had parted from her only yesterday morning, told her of the pretty little cottage which he hoped to own very, very

soon, and whispered of a wedding at the beginning of the glad New Year?

Smiling up into her father's face, as she met him at the gate, she was surprised at the pitying expression in his eyes, and his unusually grave and perplexed face. He only said, "Poor child!" with a sigh, and Andrie, with a sudden indefinable terror smiting her heart, walked into the house, faint and pallid, followed by the wondering Cecil.

"Has anything happened, mamma?" The girl's hand grasped the top of her mother's chair, and her voice sounded hollow and strange.

"O my child, my child! they say Harry Rawdon never reached Dryburgh! His carriage was found broken to pieces near that sudden turn in the river, you remember—" but Andrie waited to hear no more. Clapping her two cold hands over her smitten heart, slowly, with fixed stony eyes, as one walking in a dream, she dragged herself up to her chamber, and sat down, white and rigid.

"I *must* come in, Andrie darling! O, isn't this dreadful, terrible! What could have become of him! Had he fallen into the river, surely they would have found—" here Cecil was fairly terrified at the tearless solemn eyes turned so wildly upon her; she clasped the rigid form, and showered tears of sisterly love upon it, beseeching Andrie to weep, to speak, to break this awful silence.

"O sister! I must tell you the worst—you will not, *cannot* believe it! Mr. Browne has missed a large sum of money from his safe, and Harry Rawdon's handkerchief was found by the door; so they say retribution has overtaken him for his crime. You know it is impossible, Andrie; Andrie!" For the erect form suddenly dropped from the chair, and fell to the floor in a long awful swoon.

When Andrie recovered, she was, to the surprise of all, calm and quiet, even cheerful betimes. Whatever may have been her lover's fate, she, in the depths of her true heart, doubted not his innocence of the alleged crime.

But O, the swinging to of the golden gates which had opened so widely to admit her into a realm of beauty and brightness! How the silvery glitter of those glorious winter mornings—the trees by the gate all agleam with their icicle jewels, or beautified by a downy garb of snow—made the dreariness within her soul more plainly felt by the greatness of the contrast! Yet, like glimpses of

the sun on a cloudy day, would the hope of coming joy betimes struggle through the gloom. So, hoping, she prayed; and praying, she waited.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. ALFRED FORBES was in her new home, a tasteful little dwelling, opposite Mrs. Thorpe's, on the other side of the river. Old Mrs. Earle, to Sybil's delight, deferred taking up her abode with them until after the receiving and returning of the bridal visits. So Sybil was settled in her new domain, superintending, to the best of her ability, the maid-of-all-work of the establishment.

A few weeks brought the old lady, with her antiquated baggage, to her granddaughter's door. Good Mrs. Thorpe shook her head dubiously as she left her roof, for, knowing well the old lady's love of authority and interference, she trembled for the peace and quietude of the home across the river on that account, if no other shadow darkened it. Time sped on; six swift months glided away, and even that short space could bring care, and grief, and trials, and heartaches. Let us glance at the Forbes's affairs for a while.

Sybil, with a face anything but pleasant, sat by the table stitching a wristband, and jerking the needle as though the employment was anything but agreeable. As Mrs. Earle came into the room, she said, sharply:

"There, grandma, you see what your interference has done! Sarah is going to leave to-night; she says she won't live where there are two mistresses, and I'm sure I wouldn't stay where any one was around poking into everything in the kitchen, instead of staying quietly in one's room! A pretty fix I'm in!" she exclaimed, angrily, flinging down her work on the table; "all the ironing and baking to do myself! It was just the same with Ann and Bridget; I couldn't keep them because you scolded and beat them, and kept them at work every minute of their lives. I say, if I'm the mistress of this house, I don't want my servants interfered with!"

"What do you say?" screamed her grandmother, coming up to Sybil and shaking her roughly by the shoulder. "Who says I interfere with your servants! I don't beat and scold them! I'm as good to them as you are. I'm sure they need scolding sometimes, the lazy hussies! and you needn't think I'm going to stay shut up in my room all the time.

You shan't trample me under foot! I shall go into the kitchen and pantry as much as I please. Who pays your girls' wages, I'd like to know? Who supports you and your lazy husband? I see! I see! he thought to get my money when he married you, but he shan't get a cent, not a cent!"

"O grandma, do hush!" cried Sybil. "I'm sure you're kind to me, but I wish you would not abuse me so sometimes! You needn't talk so against Alfred; you used to say once you loved him as well as you did me."

"I never could bear the sight of him!" shrieked the grandmother; "and you had better get your things on and go and look for another girl. Try and get a small colored one; they're easier to manage. Go up and see if Mary Jones will let me have one of hers, or one of the boys either. Boys can do more work than girls, in my opinion. I always had colored boys to work for me, and made them stand round, too." And her cane was uplifted, as though to castigate an imaginary negro juvenile.

"Yes," said Sybil to herself, as she went out, "she would like to have some one whom she could scold, and whip, and torment at her pleasure. I declare, I've no peace of my life! I wonder what I ever married for? I almost wish grandmother would die. I know it's wicked, but I don't see what I have to be treated so shamefully for; just like a little child! There's Annie King as happy as the day is long. Such a pleasant home and a kind husband, and no one to pester her to death!"

After Mrs. Forbes had gone out, her husband came in and entered the sitting-room, where Mrs. Earle sat, rocking slowly in her chair.

"How's your head this afternoon, Mrs. Earle?" said he, with an attempt at a smile, and drawing a chair up beside her. "I suppose you are glad that warm weather has come; there won't be as much chance of your getting cold."

"O, my head is well enough to-day," answered she, quite pleased at his kind manner.

"Where is Sybil? she hasn't left you alone this afternoon, has she? She shouldn't do that way."

"I sent her to look for a servant girl; Sarah is going to leave."

"Ah, I am almost glad of it; she has been very disrespectful to you, I think. She's an impudent piece. She should obey your directions as much, if not more than Sybil's.

You surely have better judgment, and are more experienced. By the way, Mrs. Earle, do you think you could lend me a hundred dollars? I'm rather pushed for money, just now; I suppose every one is in that predicament once in a while, and since I've had that store I've met with a good many reverses. I will return it in a month or two."

"I don't see why you need be pushed for money now, unless you were in debt, or something of that sort. Your expenses at home can't be much; I pay my board every week, and give Sybil all her clothes. But I suppose you must have it," and she arose to unlock her desk. "It must be paid back in three months though." And the old lady's miserly eyes gleamed sharply up over her spectacles.

"Yes, yes, certainly, Mrs. Earle; really, I'm much obliged for the loan." And passing out, he muttered, "How I will ever get it again, is more than I can tell; it's rather more than I bargained for, this letter from Lawyer Flynn. I don't know how I shall get these old scrapes cleaned off. But she's got money, and I must have it."

Next morning found Sophy Jones pursuing the ceaseless round of duties in the Forbes's household. Ceaseless, because Mrs. Earle could not bear to see any one rest an instant, when they were paid for working, and grudgingly did she see the wages paid to those in her service. She could be generous, nevertheless, and often was; she could be agreeable and chatty, too, when she chose. When no cloud was in the domestic horizon, she was to visitors a very pleasant old lady, but quite the reverse to any who happened in just after a household hurricane; and such occasions were becoming far too frequent.

"Sophy, don't you let that bread burn. Sophy, come here, quick, and make me a fire. My feet are cold, if it is summer. Go quick, Sophy, and see where Mrs. Forbes is, and tell her I want her to come here. Sophy, come here and help me make my bed. Come quick, you lazy girl!" giving her a taste of the cane on her shrinking shoulders. "Have you been stealing in the pantry? You'd better be civil and mind how you act, you jade!" Such were the cries, with frequent variations, day in and day out.

One day, in the following summer, when Sybil's little May was six months old, Miss Isabel Earle came from a distant city to Eildon, to visit the sister she had not seen for years. She would not make Mr. Forbes's

house her home; she had suffered too much in early life from her grandmother's hands, to be willing to be near her all the time, although that same grandmother had done more for her than any one else in the world, as far as her worldly circumstances were concerned. She had relatives in the neighboring town with whom the time would pass pleasantly, and she intended to visit and help Sybil whenever she could. She was of a different type from her younger sister; tall, independent-looking, and self-reliant, with excellent ideas and good judgment. She came to Sybil's home on rather a stormy occasion. Mr. Forbes was away from home, being engaged in some absorbing speculation; his store had been closed long ago for want of money, in spite of repeated sums borrowed, by means of fair promises from Mrs. Earle. Sophy, to escape the unendurable scoldings and whippings, had left unknown to any one, the evening before.

Isabel heard loud angry voices, as after vainly knocking at the outer door she ventured into the kitchen. Sybil, quite unlike the Sybil of Mrs. Maybury's party, was standing by the stove, in a torn morning-dress and soiled apron, her hair, anything but smooth, hanging down on her shoulders, and her grandmother, though leaning for support on her cane, was glaring fiercely at her, and accompanying her sharp words with a threatening shake of her finger. The entrance of Isabel upon the scene quite changed the order of things for a while. The old lady's caresses and tears were plentiful; she must have the young lady all to herself in the parlor, for a long talk. She took baby May from her crib, and introduced her to her newly-arrived auntie. Though old and feeble, she persistently attended to the child, aiming to bring it up according to her old-fashioned notions, to Sybil's extreme annoyance. Seeing her grandmother in such good-humor, Sybil ventured to put in her request for a small sum of money, needed in the household arrangements.

"Just about twenty-five cents will do, grandma," she whispered.

"You're all the time wanting money. Why didn't Alfred leave money home to last while he was gone? You think I'm made of money!"

"You haven't paid anything for your board lately. There's money in your purse; I saw it this morning. You might give me just that little sum."

"I tell you I haven't got a cent! not a cent! I haven't! I haven't!" she screamed. "You're so fierce for my money! as fierce as a blood-hound. I need twenty-five cents, don't you think I need twenty-five cents?" shrieked she, turning to the astonished Isabel, and striking her lap with her clenched fists. "But go get it! go get it!"

"Grandma, don't talk so," spoke Isabel, mildly, with a sad face. But Sybil was laughing behind Mrs. Earle's chair.

"Isabel, you must go and help Sybil! There ought to be some clothes washed for the baby, and the kitchen floor needs scrubbing. You came in good time. There's no wood; I don't know what we will do for wood."

"Why, doesn't Mr. Forbes provide for his family, grandma? Surely he doesn't leave everything to you?"

"I don't know what they would do if it wasn't for me. He goes off, the dear knows where, and little he cares for his family, or how they get along when he's away. He knows I won't let them starve."

"O Sybil! how can you and grandma talk and act as you do?" said Isabel, as they sat alone that evening after the old lady had retired. "You're not at all respectful to her, and you know, with all her roughness and unkindness, she has done everything for us."

"I can't help it! Nobody else has to endure what comes upon my shoulders. Don't you ever marry, sister, or if you do, look well before you leap."

"Where are all the girls I used to know when we were young, and played and studied together? What happy days, when mamma was with us, and papa was kind to us?"

Sybil's face softened at the mention of her mother. She answered quietly:

"Some of them have changed a great deal, and others seem just the same. You remember Andrie Blair and her sister Cecil, don't you? Andrie was engaged to a Mr. Rawdon, a nice young man, they say, but he disappeared very mysteriously a year and a half ago. She bears it very well, I believe. Cecil is to be married soon. Annie Dutton is Annie King now; I do wish you could see her house! Everything is perfect sunshine in her home. I declare, I almost envy her when I go in!"

"Are you doing all you can to make your home sunshiny, Sybil?"

"O, it's got to be always the same while grandma is here. You can't change her now,

do what you will. I hope I never shall live to be as old and ugly as she is!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE head of the family had come home again; the usual abuse and recriminations had been gone through with on all sides. Baby May's smiles and pretty ways seemed to be the only sunshine in the dark stormy weather, and despite the existence of certain circumstances, papa, mamma and baby formed a pleasant group in the sitting-room after tea. Alfred was giving a description of the scenes in his journey, in a cheerful tone, though his manner was nervous and restless under his wife's troubled gaze.

"I hear you talking about me!" screamed Mrs. Earle, coming into the room. "You needn't suppose I'm going to stay in there and be talked about. Alfred Forbes, why don't you see that I am cared for? No, no! you don't care! You get my money, but it's no matter whether an old infirm woman like me is neglected or not. I want good victuals to eat, and some one to attend to my wants. You and Sybil want me to die, but I won't die yet!"

"Hold your tongue, old woman, I say!" retorted Forbes. "I should not think anybody who pretended to be a Christian, as you do, would be heard scolding in that way, not to mention spitting in a man's face and swearing, as I've known you to do. You're a hateful old hypocrite, anyway!" And seizing his hat, he rushed out of the house, exclaiming to himself, "I made a great mistake when I married that girl! Why don't the old hag get out of the way? If I am out of her good graces, though, it'll be hard for me when she does go! She'll put every cent beyond my reach. I must keep a fair side to her, if I have to read the Bible and pray with her every day to keep her quiet. A fellow is almost tempted to give her a little dose of something! I can't stand this long."

Andrie's sweet pale face was gazing out of the window, as on a former evening in the olden time. How the yearning, wistful sweetness of her expression startled and smote the passer as he hurried by! He nearly stumbled against the bent form of an old man who was coming down the sidewalk.

"Queer looking old chap, that," he muttered, gazing after the vanishing figure. "Wonder who he is! Sybil's old father, perhaps, come back from the ends of the

world, where he's been ranging for years, to plague the old woman again?"

It was indeed Sybil's father who knocked at the door that evening. Sybil turned deathly white when she saw him, and Mrs. Earle glared furiously, while she trembled violently.

"What brings you here, James Earle?" she cried, hoarsely. "I disowned you long ago for your evil deeds! You, who left your wife and children for your old mother to support, while you squandered the money not your own; how dare you show your face where I am, you drunken vagabond!"

"It's only the need of what I know you can give me that brings me here," answered the unwelcome visitor, with a disagreeable leer, as he took a chair unasked. "Just give me some more money, old lady, and I'll go where you shall never hear from me again."

"I've only got two hundred dollars; take that and get out of my sight as soon as you can!" she shouted, advancing towards him with clenched fists.

"Halloo, Sybil, haven't you a kiss for your father, girl?" But Sybil was hastening from the room, and moaning, "I can't speak to you, indeed I cannot!"

Clutching the money in his hard hand, James Earle went from the house, but where, they never knew.

Perhaps the anxiety and trouble he had caused her in the past, had made old Mrs. Earle the unhappy, passionate being she was; for he had been a wild, reckless, dissipated young man, whom age had made worse instead of better.

Three years elapsed, bringing their changes everywhere. Two more little faces were seen in Sybil's home, and care and trouble had not ceased therein; rather had they spread their black wings further over the dwelling. Sybil's face was more fretful, and her appearance more slovenly; the old lady grew more feeble and helpless every year. She retained all her faculties, as well as her quarrelsome disposition, and was still an inmate of her granddaughter's home. Alfred Forbes still roved from one thing to another, speculating and failing; often remaining away from home for weeks, to the distress of Sybil, who became dependent on her relative for the necessities of life. Of late the old lady had ascertained that Alfred had contracted a number of heavy debts before his marriage and after, and the vituperative language she showered upon him served to enkindle the

bitterest hatred in his mind toward her. Affairs went on from bad to worse.

"Sybil," said her husband, one evening, as he sat sulkily by the fire, "didn't your grandmother draw some money lately, a large amount, I mean? Come, speak out; you know, if anybody does."

"I believe she did," answered his wife, slowly, gazing abstractedly into the fire. "Why do you wish to know?"

"She must lend me some to-night," he replied, desperately; "go and tell her so: I can't endure her abuse; I should be tempted to blow out her brains if I got roused. Tell her nothing short of five hundred dollars will do."

"I cannot ask her, Alfred," said Sybil, still looking into the grate. "You have asked so often for money, and you never repay her, that now she has no confidence in you. Sometimes it seems as if I had no faith in you either!" She spoke drearily, her head resting on her hand as she leaned forward. "O Alfred!" And she rose and came to his side with a pleading look. "Why is it that you are so unhappy? What dreadful influence is this which seems to hold you so fatally? You seem cold and cruel, and I think you did really love me in the old-time days! I must tell you that I cannot bear that you should be so intimate with Edgar Thorne; he is a bad man. I feel that I never was fit to counsel, to help you. I was childish and thoughtless, but can we not together redeem the past?" And the great tears sprang to her eyes.

A momentary good impulse darted into Alfred Forbes's soul, and relaxed the hardened face into somewhat of tenderness; then he spoke harshly, yet with a strange tremor in his voice, as the old expression settled there again.

"Pshaw, Sybil! don't waste your tears on me. Go, like a good girl, and coax your good grandmother to do something for your graceless husband! She'll listen to you, I'm certain."

"Stop, Alfred, there's something else I must say; it came to my ears the other day that you had been seen the worse for liquor. O, if I thought—but I should lay all the blame on that wicked Edgar Thorne. I will not believe it of you, my husband!"

"Hush!" he exclaimed, with sudden fierceness, pushing her rudely from him; "you know nothing of Thorne except from hearsay, and it's none of your business if I do take a

glass or two! Do as I tell you, and ask your grandmother to lend me five hundred dollars, or I'll—" He raised his hand menacingly.

Poor Sybil! With all their war of angry words and looks, her husband had never offered to strike her a blow till then, and she started with a quick cry, as though already smitten, and hurried to the door of Mrs. Earle's room.

The old lady was resting on her couch, and had fallen into a slight slumber. She started up as Sybil entered, and looked wildly around.

"Grandma," the poor child began, in a faltering voice, "can you lend Alfred some money? He seems in trouble—O, do please help him! help both of us! It seems as if something dreadful is coming upon us!"

Mrs. Earle sprang up like an enraged tigress. Glaring into Sybil's frightened face, she spoke hoarsely, in measured tones:

"Dare you stand there, Sybil Forbes, and ask me to lend your husband money, my hard earned money? Did he dare ask you to come to me? You know better! you know I won't lend him a cent! Haven't I lent him six hundred dollars already, since we have lived here together? and what has become of it all? Never a cent of it have I seen again, except fifty dollars. Yes, I've provided for his wife and children. I've paid his old debts. I've given him money to throw away! I won't do it! how dare you to ask me!" screamed she. "You'll repent of this some day, both of you! When you see me dead, when you see me a cold stiff corpse, then you'll wish you'd done better! then you'll remember the way you used me when I was alive! Yes, I shall soon die, and my money shall burn your hands like coals of fire!"

Sybil, terrified and sick at heart, turned to go. How should she tell Alfred? What could she say to her cold-hearted husband? As she crossed the little entry and laid her hand on the doorknob, she heard the sound of suppressed voices in the sitting-room. Opening the door in surprise, she saw Edgar Thorne seated by her husband, talking earnestly. He arose on her entrance, with the blandest politeness in tone and manner, but Mrs. Forbes, with visible disgust in her countenance, disdained to take his offered hand, and the coldness of her greeting was very evident to Thorne, who bit his lip in vexation, and a fierce glance from his eye made Sybil cower as she sank into a chair, and tried to appear calm.

"What success, Sybil?" asked Forbes, aside.

"She says you cannot have it," was the trembling whisper, her heart in her throat.

"O, very well!" muttered he, his mouth set in a strange expression, and his eyes gleaming wildly beneath his black brows; then he added, aloud:

"You look tired, Sybil; you had better retire. Thorne and I have some writing to do, and may be obliged to be up very late."

Sybil rose mechanically and walked to the door. She knew her presence was not wished, and she dared not linger. How she longed to be possessed of superhuman power, for an instant, that she might destroy the influence of Edgar Thorne over her husband! She opened the door, passed into her room, and closed it with a last appealing yet unanswered glance behind. She stood by the children's bedside and watched them as they slumbered quietly. May's sunny hair lay in tangled curls round her white brow, and her little arm was clasping Emma's plump neck, as they slept the sleep of innocent childhood.

"O, that I were a child again, sleeping thus, free from this aching burden of sorrow and care!" came in an agonized whisper from the mother's white lips. And there was baby Willie in his cradle, with features so like his father's. "O, can I bear to think that he will be like him as he grows to boyhood and manhood!" she moaned, as she tucked the coverlet around the unconscious little form, while scalding tears rained upon the child's face. She went to the window and gazed out on the dark sullen waters of the cove near her dwelling. All was silence and gloom without that dreary November night. The sky was starless and cheerless. She heard the faint sound of the black waters plashing against the piers of the little bridge, and an awful thought flashed across her racked brain. Could she not hide herself and her sorrows away beneath those cold waves? O, if rest would only come! anything but this daily painful routine of care and trial!

Sybil awoke a little after midnight with a start, a cold shudder thrilling her frame, a nameless terror convulsing her. She was alone, everything was silent as the grave, save that she heard the soft regular breathing of the little ones. She rose, shivering, and opened the door. All was darkness and silence beyond. She called softly—no voice answered.

"He must have gone out with Thorne; but why does he not return?" she said to

herself. "O, that the daylight would come!" And so, dozing, starting and longing, she awaited the dawn that was to bring denser darkness.

The cold, dull, straggling November morning rays looked into that dwelling and saw Sybil Forbes standing dumb with anguish in the cheerless room where she had left her husband, her eyes fixed upon a bit of paper lying on the table before her; the words thereon, that pierced her through like so many dagger-thrusts, were these:

"Good-by, Sybil; I've been a long time thinking of going, so I've concluded now is the best time. I told you I *must* have the money, so I've got it. Your grandmother can take good care of you and the children. I hope Willie will be a better man than his father ever was. You will be happier without me, for I don't think I ever loved you. Anyway, if I'm doing wrong now, I'll do one good deed, and clear Rawdon's name. I took that money from Browne; I must give my bride a suitable gift, you know! Rawdon was in the store that day; I had a sort of spite against the fellow, and wished to screen myself, so I pulled his handkerchief, with his name in full, slyly from his pocket, and when I took the money I dropped the handkerchief by the safe door. If he is alive, and ever comes back, you can clear him of guilt in that affair. Clear him, anyway, dead or alive, for Andrie Blair's sake! We shall never meet again, Sybil. I don't suppose you'll feel very badly to be rid of such a fool of a husband. Thorne's in a hurry.

"ALFRED FORBES."

Almost paralyzed, she moved towards Mrs. Earle's room. The bed-curtains were closely drawn; her desk stood near the door—it was open—the key always hung on a nail above it; yes, the money was gone, and how should she tell Mrs. Earle of the dreadful trouble that had befallen them? How should she bear the weight of woe—drag through the dreary years before her! She moved towards the bed and gently pulled aside the curtain. One glance, an agonizing shriek, and the servant-maid, roused by the awful cry, rushing in, found her mistress in convulsions upon the floor of Mrs. Earle's room. There on the bed, white and still, lay a lifeless body. Mrs. Earle had had her last display of temper, had said her last words, and done her last deeds!

Here we shall leave Sybil Forbes; the dewy

brightness faded quite out of her life, heart-ache and sorrow abundant; yet with kind friends around her path, and the young faces of her children smiling beside her, the sombre clouds may yet be tinged betimes with a golden glimmer.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOUR years and a half had somewhat changed blithe Andrie Blair. She had still the same softly tender eye, and the rare smile of yore, but the mouth wore an expression of sweet patience and resignation unseen there in her younger, happier days.

Life for her was not a spiritless, monotonous round of duties, to be got over in the quickest, most careless way possible, because she would not be expected to enter into them with much zest or animation; to her life was real, earnest! she could enjoy all there was in it to be enjoyed.

Merry Cecil's manner was somewhat less lively than before Andrie's great trouble came. The sight of her sister's sad face often checked her lively sallies and cheery laugh. When at length she went to a happy home and a noble loving heart, Andrie rejoiced in her sister's great joy, and the loving pair sought to make her days full of peace and pleasant enjoyment. Cecil's home was always open to her, and there she spent many joyous hours. One glorious June afternoon, when the broad sunlight was beginning to decline in the blue heavens, Andrie donned her hat for a walk to her sister's dwelling. She felt unusually cheerful as she tripped through the village, past the pretty white houses with their neat flower-gardens, radiant with summer bloom.

People meeting her, so smiling, so lovely, wondered at her mien; surely she had forgotten all her great sorrow, and she wondered herself that she could be so light-hearted. She even felt like bursting into singing as she walked along the street.

Are there such things as premonitions of great joy?

She met Mr. Leigh, Cecil's husband, walking very fast. He started as she stepped before him, and said, hurriedly, with a strange smile, "Go on, Andrie, Cecil is expecting you this afternoon;" and was gone.

Cecil, fresh as a daisy in her airy muslin, tripped down to the gate to meet her sister, and twining her arm lovingly around her, led her up the steps into the house. Very

honey and homelike was the pretty parlor. Lilies and roses were scattered on the dark blue groundwork of the carpet; easy-chairs and lounges, covered with lacy netting, the products of Cecil's busy fingers, were placed invitingly round the room; vases, filled with clusters of choice flowers, adorned table and mantel; comfort and elegance reigned everywhere. Cecil removed her sister's hat, and laughingly bade her rest in the rocking-chair, read or amuse herself at the piano, while she attended to certain affairs in the kitchen.

"We will have an early tea; Robert is always at home early, and then for a twilight walk up the lane, balmy air, breath of flowers, and all that goes to make up the scene;" and laughing merrily, the joyous little sunbeam made her exit.

Andrie sat with half closed eyes in a dreamy reverie. The fading sunbeams stole in through the lace curtains, and glimmered on the wavy masses of hair that clustered round her quiet face. So sweet, so peaceful was the still summer eve, she wished for nothing just then but to sit still and dream, watching the tall white waxen lilies through the half open door, as they swayed in the evening's breezy breath. As she sat, her thoughts wandered into the checkered past, and she dreamed her strange life over, scarcely realizing where she was, until the last sunbeam had left the windows, and Cecil was standing beside her with a very rosy laughing face, and a queer brilliancy in her eyes.

"Dear me! I believe you are nearly asleep. Robert has come, and tea is quite ready. Wait a minute till I fasten this gem of a pink bud in your hair; and here's one to put in with your brooch. I want you to look your prettiest when—when you come to take tea with me," she said, with a knowing laugh, as though something irrepressible would rise to her cherry lips.

"I do believe I have lost my appetite!" she exclaimed, as they sat around the prettily arranged tea-table; "and you don't eat either, Robert! Do, pray, keep Andrie company, or she will imagine there's nothing else in the house to eat, and we are starving ourselves!"

The meal over, how pleasant the stroll up the grassy lane, between gently waving branches, past still green nooks, and velvety mosses veiled by the soft twilight!

Cecil was in a perfect flutter of happiness. She clasped Andrie so tightly that the latter almost screamed, and danced along excitedly,

chatting in a manner wholly inexplicable to her sister.

"O Andrie! just imagine how delightful it would be if you were to see Harry Rawdon step right out of that clump of green fir trees yonder! Do you think it would upset your nerves altogether?" She looked up into the face suddenly clouded, and saw an expression of deep pain in the moist eyes.

"Cecil, Cecil! how can you! You are not always thus thoughtless!"

"I do not ask you to imagine it, dearest Andrie, it's all the blessed truth! Look yonder, coming to meet you!"

Yes, surely it was Harry Rawdon's tall form; the face changed, it is true, bronzed and bearded heavily, but the light in the well-known eyes was the same that had brightened Andrie's heart long ago, and though her cheek whitened, and her frame trembled with the suddenness of the joy, she sprang from Cecil's side, and hastened to meet her long-lost lover.

"O, I'm so very happy about this that I don't know what to do," laughed charming Cecil to her husband. "I could scarcely refrain from rushing into the parlor, and telling Andrie the whole delightful news, after you came in and told me of your meeting Harry, and arranging the interview!"

They stood in the door in the dim light, among the vines and flowers, and awaited the coming of the lovers. In the little parlor, sitting quietly together, the story of the wanderer's absent years was rehearsed to the eager two.

Harry's horse had taken fright in a dangerous part of the road close by the edge of the river, and finally succeeded in breaking the carriage, and running away after his master had been precipitated into the water. Harry received a severe wound as he fell against the rocks, and, stunned by the blow, would probably have remained where he fell, partially beneath the water, until covered by the advancing tide, had not the sharp cry uttered as he struck against the cliff brought a boat to his rescue, containing part of a crew of a whaling vessel which was lying at the mouth of the river, waiting to go out with the tide. The sailors lifted the unconscious form and carried it to their ship, and when Rawdon returned to consciousness he was out on the wide ocean, away from home, and friends, and happiness. Nothing could induce the captain to return, or even to allow the poor fellow to be put on board a home-

ward-bound ship; they were in need of a hand just then, and were determined not to part with him, considering him as bound to obey their wishes, because they had saved his life. He could only wait as he toiled through the tedious voyage of three years, trusting in Andrie, and hoping to meet her again. After enduring many hardships and dangers, hindering his return, and causing him almost to despair of ever seeing his native shores again, a kind Providence aided him, and restored him to his loved ones. Of the crime charged against him he had heard nothing, and they were calmly, serenely happy in the quiet parlor on that lovely June evening. Andrie Blair's life, like a change-

ful day, bright in the morning, overcast at noon, and radiant again at eventide, was filled with sweetness and brightness.

Sorrow cannot last always, else would the spirit quail and faint; and the sunrays are warmer and more glowing to the eyes after we have emerged from the dark, cold, troubled seas of grief, where we have long wandered forlornly.

The wedding bells rang out their merry chimes on Andrie's marriage day, and music's strains, and joy, and smiles, and sunbeams, made the scene as gleeful as ever such scene was upon earth.

"The day that begins with a cloudy dawn
A golden glory at last may gain."

LILLIA'S TRIAL.

BY CORA CHESTER.

"My dear, this coffee is abominable! Can't you ever induce Bridget to settle it?"

The fastidious gentleman pushed his cup from him in disgust, and viewed a little of the nauseous liquid upon the tip of his teaspoon.

"Better get out your eye-glasses, Ralph," retorted a weak fretful voice behind the coffee-urn, "although your eyes are generally sharp enough to discover all the little deficiencies of my housekeeping without them. Are you quite sure that that is all this morning? Isn't the steak overdone, or the muffins heavy, or the cream sour, or the toast hard?"

"Your tongue is sharp enough, at any rate," muttered the gentleman, irately. "Do try and cultivate a sweeter temper, Lillia."

"Thanks, my dear; I will endeavor to obey the commands of my lord and master, and sweeten my disposition to please his fastidious taste. Are there any other trifling orders this morning?"

"I declare, Lillia, you are enough to try the temper of a saint with your sarcastic tongue!"

He finally tasted of his coffee again, made a wry face, and ended by drinking it all and reaching for a second cup. Then feeling absently in his pockets, he tossed a letter to his wife, and soon forgot his ill-humor in the morning paper.

While Lillia is reading her letter we will look across the table at her pale little face opposite Ralph; and, although my heroine had appeared to very poor advantage in the morning's encounter, she has loving dark eyes, a sweet winning mouth, and can be a very charming woman when she chooses.

Before marriage she was regarded by the gentleman opposite as an angel, a spirit too heavenly for our mundane sphere; yet this same angel must now be able to bake pies and cake, and teach an ignorant Irish girl the mysteries of cooking. With pretty childishness Lillia had confessed her inability to her lover, yet, after the wedding-day, forgetful of this, he had commenced a perfect system of complaining,

often without cause, until Lillia, always petted and spoiled, seemed in a fair way to degenerate into a disagreeable sarcastic woman. Love had almost departed from this deluded couple, and all for insignificant foolish little causes, too small, one would think, to be able to destroy the happiness of two lives.

"Whom was your letter from?" asked Ralph, in a pleasanter tone, after glancing over the money market, and seeing that his pet speculations were in a fair way to succeed.

"A friend," answered his wife, laconically.

"Cannot you be a little more explicit?"

For reply she tossed him the letter, and went on munching her toast.

"So you are going to have a visitor, Lill, eh?"

"That depends entirely upon you, Ralph. If you object, I will write and tell her that we don't care to see her."

"Don't make me out a brute," in an injured tone. "You can have your house full of company, for all I care. Mollie Creighton," with a glance at the letter, "pretty enough name. A very particular friend, is she not?"

"O, one of the dear five hundred I met at school. She has married since those days, and is a widow now, I believe. It will be a bore to have her come, but I must be a little hospitable, I suppose."

Her husband noticed the weary tone and languid half-sick manner, but merely looked annoyed, and with a few more remarks left the house, proceeded down town, and soon forgot his wife in the excitement of buying up Erie.

Lillia ascended to her room, and with a sob threw herself upon the bed, and indulged in a good old-fashioned cry.

"What a fool I was to marry Ralph Greyland! Our dispositions are so different, and I think, nay, I *know* that he is growing to hate me!" Then, with a glance at the mirror, she saw her own reflection, the red eyes, frowsy black hair, soiled wrapper, and sorrowful don't-care figure.

"No wonder," she sighed. "Why un-

der the sun and earth did the elegant Ralph Greyland ever choose me for a wife? I loved him, O, so madly! and what has my hero, whose every wish was to be law to me, become in my eyes? Well, to be truthful, he has degenerated into a fretful, overbearing, fault-finding husband; enough to drive one at times to the verge of distraction! Nothing like marriage to take the glamour off of love."

The next few days passed very much as this one had done. Ralph found fault as usual, and Lillia became daily more careless, fretful and miserable. Both felt a sense of relief when one evening a carriage stopped at their door, and a dazzling vision of feminine loveliness stood upon the threshold.

"Why, Lillia, darling, isn't this a surprise, though? I didn't tell when I should arrive, for fear I couldn't come up to time. I never *do* keep engagements, you know. So my little canary bird has been getting married, and the happy man is an Adonis, no doubt. I knew a Mr. Greyland once, but he wasn't a bit handsome; one of my victims, poor fellow?"

"As nonsensical as ever, I see, Mollie," laughed Lillia; "but come, off with those wraps, and then *my* Mr. Greyland shall be presented, and answer for his personal appearance himself."

She conducted Mrs. Creighton up to her best chamber, and watched her radiant friend, half evasively, as she drew out her blonde crimps, tied her crisp white necktie, and talked in a free-hearted girlish way, while the blue eyes, pink cheeks and dimples quite bewildered her silent auditor. Down stairs they went together, with arms twined about each other, quite in schoolgirl fashion. They made a pretty picture as they entered Ralph Greyland's library.

"Mollie, allow me to present my husband, Ralph, Mrs. Creighton."

She expected a friendly greeting, but she was not prepared for Mollie's start of surprise, nor for Ralph's nervous grasp of her friend's hand, and the eager:

"Why, Mollie Moore! this you? A pleasant surprise, to be sure; and I never knew you had married!"

"And I never dreamed *you* were Lillia's husband," laughed Mollie. "The idea of Ralph Greyland ever becoming a married man!"

"Why, does it seem such an anomaly to you, Mollie? Did you think your refusal had crushed me utterly and forever?"

The question was asked in a light laughing tone, and although Lillia called herself foolish to attach importance to it, a new weight seemed crushing her heart, and only by the presence of the demon jealousy did she discover how deep and true was her love for the husband she thought she had grown to hate.

Ralph became strangely silent and *dis-trait* after Mrs. Creighton's arrival, often sitting in a corner for hours together and watching their gay guest with intense hungry eyes.

Mollie seemed utterly unconscious of this scrutiny, for she continued her childish coquetries, bewildering toilets and tender love songs, quite as if no such person as Ralph Greyland existed in the world. Lillia, pale and quiet, watched the pair; but she could not read Ralph's heart, and failed to detect whether Mollie Creighton's innocent unconsciousness were feigned or not.

One night the bitter truth was partially forced upon her.

"Contemptible little flirt!" she muttered under her breath, as Mollie, whom she now cordially hated, one morning called Ralph to her.

"You are quite a genius, are you not, Mr. Greyland? Well, here is a test for your ingenuity."

She held out her dazzling milk-white arm, from which hung a heavy chain bracelet.

"Some of the links are broken, and I am so anxious to wear it to-night! Can you mend it?"

"More easily than I can a broken heart," muttered Ralph Greyland, hoarsely, taking the perfect marble-like arm in his hot nervous hand, and vainly trying to connect the links of the broken bauble.

"What nonsense!" laughed Mollie, with a long side-glance at Lillia beneath her golden lashes. But Lillia's eyes were bent resolutely upon her work, and as they stood in the back parlor, Mollie concluded she hadn't heard. She leaned over until her golden curls fell upon Ralph's hand, and whispered, tremulously:

"They are less difficult to connect than the links which bound us together in the years gone by."

He raised his eyes to meet Mrs. Creighton's tender downcast glance. The mad infatuation which years before had bound him as her slave again seized him. Forgetful of his wife, he bent and left one long fervent kiss upon the delicate blue-veined arm.

Lillia's back was towards them now, but it was to hide the trembling mouth, scalding tears and outraged love, which threatened to betray her.

"Contemptible little flirt!" she muttered; "she shall not know that she has wounded me."

Both Ralph and Mollie, after a glance at the quiet figure, looked relieved. Mollie escaped to her room, and Ralph made a hasty exit from the house.

"O Ralph! Ralph!" sobbed Lillia, as with bowed head she listened to his retreating footsteps, "you loved me once, but she has robbed me! Mollie Creighton, I hate you! I hate you!"

But, all unknown to Lillia, Ralph's eyes were being opened, and conscience was busy knocking at his heart.

Almost choking with his mixed emotions of guilty love and bitter self-contempt, Ralph had hurried into the street, and made his way to his office. When there, he found his old-time bachelor friend, Launce Hartwell, awaiting him.

"Halloo, Greyland! up to time, eh? Are you always on the mark after breakfast?"

"Not always so prompt," laughed Ralph.

"And, if Mrs. Grundy is to be trusted, your home is more alluring than ever. Charming Mrs. Creighton is with you, is she not? That is, the world calls her charming, but to me she is unmasked. Of course you are familiar with her history?"

"Her history?" gasped Ralph. "Yes, partially. To be truthful, Launce, we were lovers once."

"You mean that you were her lover once," corrected Launce, with a bitter cynical laugh. "That is Mollie Creighton's specialty, alluring new victims. She cares not whether they be married or single, old or young, rich or poor; anything for flattery and conquest. She will coquet indecently with all, and would flirt with a stable-boy, were none other of the masculine sex available?"

Ralph's cheeks grew hot and red as he listened to his friend. Launce Hartwell

was too noble to descend to malicious backbiting, and against the wild cry of his heart Ralph knew that he was listening to the truth.

"She drove Tom Creighton to forgery and suicide by her folly and mad extravagance," went on the stern accuser. "I was there during the earlier part of their married life, and know that I speak the truth. She actually tried to make a victim of me, but found I was of sterner stuff, and gave me up as a cross-grained old bachelor. Tom worshipped his bride, and although he was only on a clerk's salary, gave her every indulgence and gratified her whims. If he hinted that a Parisian robe or love of a bonnet was beyond his means, she would sulk and cry for days together, and drive him to distraction by her recriminations and baby tears. At last there came a time when he never even tried to check her insane love of dress. Money flowed freely into her coffers, and her devoted husband fairly rained greenbacks into her pocket-book. For six months Madam Mollie flaunted in fine laces, cashmere shawls and velvet robes; then like wildfire the news flew about town that Tom Creighton had defaulted the bank of ten thousand dollars, and had shot himself before the law could seize him. Mrs. Creighton was out driving at the time, with a Colonel Raymond, a divorced man who had deserted his wife that he might follow this modern Circe, when the news reached her. She seemed conscience-stricken, for I will do her the justice to say that she loved Tom Creighton next to her clothes and flattery, and tore around in regular stage style. Then she gave up society, closed her house, and disappeared one night, no one knew where. I hadn't heard of her since until she turned up as your guest. She is a dangerous woman, Ralph, and for your own and Lillia's sake, be careful."

Ralph flushed crimson, and he mentally called himself a fool as he remembered all the silly flattery he had poured into Mollie Creighton's ear.

"Forgive me, chum," continued his friend, in a gentler, sadder tone; "but your wife is looking far from well. She has faded terribly since her marriage. What a bewitching, dazzling little fairy Lillia Lee was! Why, man, I would have given my life for her in those days, and

now it pains me to see her miserable. You have won the priceless gift of her love, Greyland, and with such a wife you are blessed indeed!"

Ralph studied Launce Hartwell's face with surprise. This, then, was the woman-hater, the cynical bachelor, who had never bowed at woman's shrine! He had discovered his friend's secret, and Ralph would never again wonder, with the rest of Launce Hartwell's friends, why he had passed through life solitary and alone, with no wife's loving hand to smooth care from his brow, nor children's innocent prattle to cheer his handsome home.

As Ralph Greyland stood upon his doorstep, late that night, a new resolve was in his heart. He had conquered his mad infatuation for Mollie Creighton, and all the old tender love for Lillia had returned to him.

"Poor darling" he murmured, as her sad pale face with its sorrowful eyes rose before him; "I have wandered terribly from the path of duty and true love. I see the past more clearly now, and I have not made a tender thoughtful husband; for even before Mollie Creighton came to destroy our happiness I was fault-finding and hateful. Lillia, poor child, grew discouraged, and ceased her childish caresses and kisses. Ah, if I could but live it all over again! Dear little wife, she is sick, and has overdone herself lately, but I must atone for it all in the future."

But Ralph little dreamed how his poor wife had spent the restless terrible hours of his absence. To avoid Mollie she had kept closely to her room all the warm afternoon, but towards evening a restless desire to find out what her dangerous guest was about seized her. She heard Mollie singing in the garden, and with an effort she left her bed, staggered to the window, and peered out into the sultry August night. Not a leaf stirred, and long years afterwards she remembered the sickening odor of tuberoses, and the choking sensation which seized her as she gasped for breath in the close sultry air.

Mrs. Creighton was beneath the window, dressed in a floating snowy robe of thin material. Her white hands grasped quantities of tuberoses and geraniums, and she crushed them in her palms until their intense fragrance caused the pale vision above stairs to shrink back with sudden

faintness. But Mollie was all unconscious of this, and thinking that she heard Ralph's step upon the gravel behind her, she commenced singing in her clear sweet voice a verse of an old tender song:

"We have met in scenes of pleasure,
We have met in halls of pride,
I have seen thy new-found treasure,
I have gazed upon thy bride.
I have marked the timid lustre
Of thy downcast happy eye;
I have seen you gaze upon her,
Forgetful I was by.
I grieve that ere I met thee,
Fain, fain would I forget thee,
'Twere folly to regret thee;
Farewell, farewell forever!"

The last tremulous note died away, and Mollie turned to meet the advancing figure. It had grown dark, and although Lillia stared intently at the pair, she could not see their faces, but their voices rose clear and distinct to the watcher above.

"Darling," exclaimed the new-comer, taking Mollie in his arms, "we are safe from all intrusion here. It has seemed an eternity since our last meeting, and this secrecy is becoming unbearable. Say that you will fly with me to-morrow, and in Europe I shall be safe to live for you and love you. Mollie, will you make this sacrifice for one you profess to love? Some would think only of the disgrace of such a step, but I would lay down my life for you, and if you will fly with me, I know that I can make you happy."

Lillia only waited to see Mollie throw her arms about his neck and kiss him passionately several times, then, with a wild cry of, "O Ralph! Ralph!" she fell in a senseless heap upon the floor.

Delirium ensued, and one spasm followed another. Ralph entered his home to find death waiting in his wife's silent chamber.

That night Lillia's baby was born. But the little life lingered only a few moments on earthly shores, then winged its way back to the God who gave it. Weary days followed, days of agony to Ralph, who never left the bedside of his wife, but fought the fell destroyer for his loved one. During those silent hours of watching he prayed as he had never prayed before, and the loving Father of all heard his petition and mercifully answered it.

One pleasant autumn afternoon Ralph took Lillia in his arms down to the sunny south parlor. The windows were open to

admit the mild air, tiny brown birds sang and twittered in the fruit trees, and red yellow maple leaves had blown in upon the gay carpet and lay in the beams of sunshine upon the floor. Lillia sank into a large chair, and Ralph wheeled her towards the window, but she turned from him as he bent and pressed a kiss on her forehead.

Mollie Creighton was still their guest, although Lillia had not seen her since her illness, and Ralph treated her with studied politeness. But this very coldness piqued her into lengthening her visit, that she might win back her recreant admirer.

As Ralph kissed his wife, Mollie came, like a vision of beauty, from among the foliage. A scarlet shawl was thrown around her, and the sunlight fell across the golden hair and perfect features. She came to the window and threw some luscious red-cheeked peaches into Lillia's lap.

"What a devoted husband, Ralph!" with a shy reproachful glance at his stern face. "How is pet Lillia this morning? She looks like a spirit with that interesting pallor."

Lillia shivered as Mollie leaned in at the window to kiss her; shrank from her, and covered her face with both thin hands. She could not bear her quondam friend's hypocrisy and fawning caresses. Perhaps Ralph guessed the truth; he said, quietly:

"Lillia is excitable and nervous yet, Mrs. Creighton, and I beg of you not to excite her. Many would call me unwise to bring her down to-day."

"A hint for me to go," laughed Mollie. "Well, good-by, *cherie*, and get back the roses soon."

Ralph took his wife's white hands in his, and strove to search her face.

"Dear one, can you not forgive my folly? I have been weak but not guilty, Lillia. Will you not say that you still care for me, and that the dear old days of our early love shall come back to us? You can never know how bitterly I have repented the past. Will you kiss me, wife, and tell me we are friends?"

His voice was low and tender, and the grave face had grown luminous with feeling. Lillia's heart answered to her husband's appeal, and she longed to take shelter in the dear arms ready to receive her, but wounded pride and love cried, "No." Should she forget that if her sickness had not prevented Ralph would even

then be abroad with Mollie Creighton in *her* place? Never! He had forsaken her when most she needed comfort, and now, with his guilty love under her very roof, dared to come to his wronged, outraged wife and plead for forgiveness.

She closed her eyes to crush back the tears, and before her rose the old picture she had raved about in her delirium, and which haunted her even in her dreams. She seemed to again inhale the perfume of tuberose, and Ralph, with Mollie in his arms, floated mockingly before her vision. Perhaps he was seeking for a reconciliation now that he might the more easily carry out his plans for flight in the future without exciting suspicion. The thought, already become a certainty in her mind, maddened her. Ralph's arms were around her, and he tried to draw her towards him; but with weak trembling hands she pushed him from her. Excitement tinged her pale cheeks with carmine, and her eyes shone with anger.

"No, Ralph Greyland, the time for reconciliation has passed. It is too late now to ask my forgiveness. Go to your early love and seek for consolation; I can never forget or forgive the past!"

Her voice was strangely cold and dry. Ralph hid his face in his hands and said:

"I have sinned, but have pity, Lillia."

"Pity!" with a hard laugh. "What pity had you or Mollie Creighton upon me during my days of illness? You triumphed in your disgrace before my very eyes, and killed my little child! Why didn't you kill me, too? Death would have been too merciful."

"Lillia, you are killing me now with your cruel words. If I have grown hateful to you I will leave you. I have business out of the city, but will return tomorrow and make arrangements for a separation. You are dearer than ever to me now, and one word from you will take this load of misery away. Be merciful, darling, and tell me I may stay!"

He knelt down beside her chair, and long afterwards the pleading sorrowful face haunted her. He waited in vain for her to speak, then with a choking, "God bless and forgive you, Lillia," he was gone.

For a moment she sat where he had left her, then, with a wild cry of, "Ralph, come back! I'll forgive you!" she fell to the floor.

With a weary sigh of pain she crept into bed that night, and conscience-stricken lay thinking of her last cruel words to Ralph. Then with the thought, "I will see him to-morrow, and ask him to forgive me," she sank into a troubled sleep.

All the next day Lillia was restless for Ralph's return, and as evening drew on she sat by the window and watched the road that led to the depot with anxious eyes.

"I was sure he would come upon this train. O, why doesn't he make haste? This anxiety is killing me!"

At last she beheld not one figure, but many coming towards her. Their steps were slow, and as they neared the house she saw that they bore a ghastly burden between them.

"His wife is here," said one, with pitying voice, as they stopped in front of Lillia's house. "Break the truth gently to her, Hartwell, and don't tell her at once that he is dead."

"Hush, man, she'll hear you!"

Lillia sat gazing out upon the bloody body and covered head with pale fixed face and staring eyes.

Was she going mad? she wondered. Ralph returned to her a cold corpse, and she unforgiving and hateful to the last! Ah, if she could have recalled those cruel words she would freely have given her life!

While she sat incapable of moving from her chair, Mollie Creighton ran screaming down the stairs, tore open the door, and covered the dead face with kisses. The sight of her anguish filled Lillia with sudden strength, and as the men entered the house and laid their burden in her room, she flew to Mollie's side, and almost dragged her from the dead.

"You have robbed me of him in life, Mollie Creighton, but he is *mine*, mine alone in death!"

Mollie Creighton stared at her with wild weeping eyes; then Lillia bent lower, and as her eyes fell upon the drawn features of the dead man she uttered a fearful cry and sank into some one's arms.

Could it be? Ralph, her loved husband, clasped her to his heart and covered her face with kisses!

"O Ralph, I thought you were dead! God only knows how I repent my wickedness. Will you forgive me, Ralph?"

Ralph's kiss of peace answered her.

Launce Hartwell drew husband and wife

out of the chamber of death where Mollie Creighton was atoning so bitterly for her past folly.

"Lillia, poor child, this excitement will kill you," murmured Ralph.

"No, no, Ralph! happiness never kills. Tell me of Mollie."

"Mollie was no widow, Lillia; the rumors of her husband's suicide were false. He has been hiding from the eyes of the law ever since, but his insane love for his unworthy wife caused him to linger about this place and meet her secretly in order to persuade her to fly with him abroad. She put off the final decision from day to day; Tom Creighton's hiding-place was discovered, and he shot himself to-night."

Lillia shivered and held Ralph closer. The terrible meeting that had crazed her brain that August evening was explained. Ralph was not guilty, and Mollie's husband had been the lover who had urged her to fly with him. Clasped in Ralph's arms, she told him all her horrible suspicions.

"No wonder you refused to forgive me. Poor Lillia! I have caused you suffering enough, but no petty trifles shall ever come between us again. By a terrible lesson we have been taught to bear with each other's faults in the future. Are we entirely reconciled, wife?"

Lillia nestled closer to him for answer.

Theirs was a happy household from that day. Mollie Creighton, a wiser and sadder woman, left them, after following her husband's form to the grave; and Lillia, years afterwards, with her children gathered about her, spoke to Ralph of their strange guest.

"Do you remember Mollie Creighton, Ralph? Well, I came across her to-day in one of my charitable rounds. Poor creature! as a Sister of Mercy she is atoning for all past follies."

"God knows she has need of repentance," muttered Ralph. "Heaven have mercy upon the households such women enter!"

"I forgive her," replied Lillia, in a softer voice. "She didn't win your love quite away, Ralph, and I feel now as if I could bid defiance to a whole host of sirens."

She certainly looked like a happy wife as she sat there. Perfect love and trust bind husband and wife together, and by no fault of his will she ever again lose faith in him in the future.

LINA'S WALK FOR DAN.

BY FENNO HAYES.

I KNEW I was just as wicked as I could be, and the more I knew it the wickeder I was. I hadn't said my prayers for a week, I could count three lies I had told in the same time, and the way I snapped up the poor innocents who sat under my supervising eye at the Cross Roads schoolhouse wasn't at all creditable to my character as an angel, though it was not the least of my sins that I had allowed a certain young gentleman to inform me that I was one on more than one recent occasion.

I took Dan's miniature, that I had brought in the top of my trunk, and put it at the very bottom, underneath everything else, and then I couldn't go to get so much as a pocket-handkerchief but it would be sure to be the very next thing to the miniature, and that hadn't any case, so there'd be Dan's great honest eyes looking into mine, just as though he hadn't any eyes for anybody but me, and didn't expect I had for anybody but him.

Then it did seem as though something possessed Dan to go on in every letter he wrote me just at this time, in the most astonishingly fervent way, about his faith, and trust, and confidence in me, and while I was reading it, it appeared to me that above every word there was this sentence written in great, staring capitals, "What if he knew?" And while Ray Marvin was looking at and talking to me as though I had just come down out of the skies, I felt as if I was too good for Dan, and when I was reading Dan's letters and remembering all, I felt Dan was too good for me. So I hadn't any comfort either way, considering I was over to the Cross Roads teaching that term for the express purpose of getting money to buy wedding finery to marry Dan in.

The very first night I came home from the schoolhouse to my boarding-place, little Min Marvin met me at the door, in a high state of excitement, with the information that "there was company come," and entering, I found Mrs. Marvin flying about the kitchen in a manner decidedly confirmatory of the fact.

"O dear!" she said, "I never was so worked up in my life. Here's John's cousin Ray, that's been all over the world, and seen kings

and queens, and the Lord knows what not, come and found me all in the suds, and John gone to mill and Sam down in the woods. He's been strolling round the fields a good hour, but he's coming back now, and I don't know who's going to keep him company while I get supper, I'm sure--unless you will, Lina--" adding this as if a new thought struck her. "I'm sure you look nice enough for anybody, to-night."

That touched me. Wasn't I nice enough any time? I stole a quick, sly glance at the little mirror hanging on the kitchen wall. There's no color I look so well in as pink, and if I live to wear my silks and velvets I don't believe I shall ever have a dress more becoming than that pink calico was that I wore that afternoon. The wind had loosed a little curl from my ribbon, and it fell down over my forehead, but I wouldn't put it up, nor so much as smooth my collar.

"Why, yes, Mrs. Marvin," I said carelessly, "I'd as lief sit in the front room as anywhere, if that will do you any good."

"I should be ever so much obliged if you would, Lina," she answered. "It seems sort of unsocial-like to leave him all alone so long when he's just come, now don't it? It will look better to have somebody in the room, if you don't say much."

Anybody would have thought this cousin was the king himself, and I barely fit to do him reverence. I've a temper that kindles at a spark, and I didn't dare to say a word, but moved toward the door with my cheeks burning and my eyes blazing, I knew.

"Aint you goin' to brush your hair?" called Min, after me. "There's a curl all loose, in front, and your ribbon looks just as if it was goin' to come off."

"If I was going before King Ahasuerus I wouldn't touch my hair," I said, scornfully, turning on my heel, "and I don't imagine any such royal presence awaits me."

The child gave me a puzzled stare, and Mrs. Marvin laughed. "Now don't fly out, Lina," she said. "I didn't mean anything, only I thought you'd naturally feel sort of diffident with a man like Ray, that's seen so much more than you have."

"I don't know as people that have seen a great deal of the world are any better than those that haven't," I said, impatiently.

"Quite the contrary, I fear," said a merry, mocking voice behind me.

I knew, of course, that the owner of this voice must be Ray Marvin himself, and I turned quickly, wondering how much of our conversation he had heard.

"Yes, all about King Ahasuerus and your hair, which you would be very foolish to disturb for him or anybody else, for I'm sure it couldn't be improved," he said, with a gay little laugh and bow, answering my look, for I hadn't said a word. "I was so dreadfully thirsty that I ventured into your kitchen, for a little water, cousin."

Just as he took the water from Mrs. Marvin's hand in came John Marvin, and Sam Dall the hired hand. No danger of their coming up behind anybody and not be heard, I thought, as they tramped in with their heavy boots, and while the cousins greeted and shook hands with each other, I looked at them, John Marvin and Ray, and wondered why I never noticed before how brown-faced, and big-handed, and awkward John was, John that everybody at the Cross Roads and thereabouts called good looking.

Now I had always thought that if a man was straight, and hadn't sleepy eyes, or red hair, or any special abomination, it wasn't so much matter about him otherwise, and as for dress, that was for us women. But Ray Marvin stood before me like a revelation. He was of nearly the same height as John, he was not so much more slender, yet John seemed big, and heavy, and burly, beside him. I couldn't tell how his figure differed, but it did, somehow, and so did his speech, just as if his words were rounded and shaped where John's fell half formed from his mouth. His eyes were large, and dark, and soft, and his hair and beard brown and silky-fine. Then his hands were white, and nobody need tell me again that dress doesn't make any difference with a man. "When I'm Dan's wife," I thought, "he shall wear cuffs every day, and I know I can make a necktie like that."

And then, suddenly, Dan's face and figure seemed to rise before me, and an evil spirit whispered in my ear, "You can never make a Ray of Dan, do what you will. See how much more he is like John." And I sighed, and hated myself for the thought and the sigh, and then wished I'd been born somebody else, or was something different, or somebody

else was something different, and so on, in a vague, restless, dissatisfied, miserable state of mind that lasted me till I decided to put off writing to Dan that night on account of being "blue."

And so I stayed down stairs and Ray told stories of places he had visited and people he had seen, sitting at a table, next me, it chanced, with some drawing paper before him, and all the while he talked he'd have a pencil at work, and once in a while, telling of some comical personage, he'd say "illustrated edition," and pass me the paper with the very person, just outlined, but looking for all the world exactly as you'd imagine he or she would look. I couldn't help laughing to save me, and so I forgot all about being blue before the evening was half over.

Then for a long time he didn't give me any pictures, but kept glancing at me, and working and talking all the time, and at last he handed me the paper.

My cheeks flamed in a moment, for it was my own face, but upon my forehead was a crown and one little curl falling from under it, and beneath the picture, he had written "Vashti."

I didn't know whether to seem offended or not, but I wasn't really, for I thought he had made me full as pretty as I was, and I should have been a different girl from what I was to have resented that.

"You don't like it," he said, snatching it back, hastily, and crumpling it in his hand, just as Min Marvin was coming up behind my chair. "Nor do I. It wasn't half pretty enough," and he looked at me with a strange, soft fire in his eyes. But he said this so rapidly and low, that I am sure no one in the room heard a word he said beside me.

"What was that?" said Min. "Why didn't you show it to me, Lina?"

"O," said Ray, answering for me, "I could see that Miss Bent thought that a failure, and I didn't want anybody else's looks condemning it. I'll make you another, ten times nicer than that. But not to-night, though. I'm going out to have a smoke, now."

"Why don't you smoke here?" said Min. "Pa does."

They all laughed at this, but the evil spirit, that I do believe took possession of me from the first moment I set eyes on Ray Marvin, set Dan before me again. "I suppose he'll smoke his pipe under my nose when I'm his wife, the same as John does," I said to myself. And then, as the fragrance of Ray's

costly cigar came faintly through the open window, I thought I shouldn't mind so much if he did, if he only smoked cigars like those.

"Real pleasant, aint he?" said Mrs. Marvin, as I took my lamp to go up stairs. "He's goin' to stay a month or so. He's an artist, you know, and calls it handsome round here, but I can't see much except hills and rocks. Enough of them, the Lord knows. I *should* like to know if he's stiddy, though."

That's the way it commenced, letting Dan's letter go to hear Ray Marvin talk. That wasn't much, I know, but the next morning I took down the dress I usually wore to school, and it didn't seem fit to wash in, somehow, and I hung it up again and put on a better one, when I'd promised myself to be fairly shabby that term, so I might have the more as Dan's bride. And that wasn't much either, only I was thinking, as I put it on, how Ray Marvin had looked at me when he said that picture wasn't half pretty enough.

The next night, when I left the school-house, Ray happened along at the same time, and we walked home together, and as he talked to me of what there was in the world, that great, glittering, bewildering world of which I knew nothing—the beauty and dress, the pictures and music, and all that money brings and buys—my mood of the night before came back, and everything and everybody round me seemed coarse and homely. And yet, I thought, Ray doesn't think me coarse and homely, that was plain enough, and I wondered if men always talked to women so—that is, these sort of men.

O dear, I guess I don't need to tell you, by this time, that I was a vain, silly girl, and I can't go over all the flattery and foolishness, the vanity and compliments, but there got to be a great many happenings, of one sort and another, and almost before I knew it, I began to think, what if Dan knew of Ray, or what if Ray knew of Dan.

And then, as I have said, I put Dan's miniature out of sight as much as I could, and let Ray Marvin say things to me that I knew he ought not, one hour, and turned a cold shoulder to him, the next.

Ray wanted to paint me, and said he was going to have me for a Jewess, and one day he said, suddenly, "Of course, I must paint you with ear jewels." And he came up behind me and pinched my ear. "Why," he said, "they're pierced. Wait a moment." And he ran up stairs and came down, bringing the handsomest set of earrings I'd ever

seen. They might have been garnets, or perhaps rubies even—I don't know much about stones—but at any rate, they were dazzlingly beautiful to me. I remember as he held them up the sun shone through them and they were like great drops of flame.

"I bought them in Genoa," said Ray. "Who for, I didn't know. They were so pretty, and perhaps I might have a sweet-heart some day." And all the while he was clasping them in my ears.

"O Mr. Marvin," I said, a little troubled, but rather faintly, I will confess, "I can't wear them."

"O, surely, just while I paint." And there wasn't a bit more meaning in his tone than just the words, though only a moment before I had trembled at every word he said, for fear of the next one, for, of course, all this time I meant to be Dan's wife.

After Ray had painted as long as I wanted to sit, I put up my hand to loosen the earrings. "O wait," said Ray; "just come and see how becoming they are. You can't think what a difference they make." And he led me before the glass. "There," he said, "did you ever look so pretty in your life? Wear them, Lina, while I stay. I like to see you pretty, you know."

I looked in the glass a moment, O they were so beautiful, and Ray was right, they did become me so much. If I only, only could have such things, but still I raised my hand to take them out.

Ray caught my hand to hold it back, and just at this moment the door opened—and there was Dan, and me before the glass, with those earrings in my ears and Ray holding my hand, that I thought he'd never, never drop.

I tried to laugh, to speak, but as true as I live I couldn't, and Ray Marvin never moved an inch, but stood beside me, just as though it was his right, instead of Dan's, who stood, white as death and as still, looking at us for a full minute, I do believe. Then, something terrible came into his face and I heard him set his teeth together, but it passed, and he went out, without a word.

As Dan shut the door Ray Marvin laughed, a little, soft, low laugh, that I could have struck him for, and walking to the window, began humming a song as unconcernedly as possible. And I knew that I had lost Dan, Dan that I loved, spite of all, and who loved me and would have been true to me forever. And what had I got in exchange? The

empty smiles and flattery of a man who would whistle me down the wind to-morrow. O fool! fool!

There came a little note for me next day, "Lina," wrote Dan, "I heard about things over to the Cross Roads from Sam Dall, but I didn't believe it, till I saw for myself. Good-by, Lina."

That was all. Well, I deserved it. I never was called very humble, but I thought that if Dan had only come to see me once more, or asked me a question, I would have gone down on my knees to confess and ask his forgiveness.

But Dan never came near, and a little while after I heard that he had left the farm and gone to Lynn, shoemaking, and that his mother said 'twas all on my account, she knew, because he didn't like to be where he couldn't help seeing me. You see, father's farm and his joined.

But he needn't have done that, I thought, bitterly, for I had engaged for another term at the Cross Roads, for the same reason. It seemed to me, I could better bear never to see Dan, than to meet him as I did others. I had heard, too, that hard work was good for anybody that had a weary mind, and I thought the winter school at the Cross Roads would furnish me with that. A man had always taught the winter term, and I don't know how they came to let me have it, except that I had got up quite a reputation for ugliness the term before.

It was the bitterest of all bitter cold days. The frost hadn't started a bit all day long on the schoolroom windows, and the air cut like a knife, for all it was so still. John Marvin had been over to the Falls, and didn't get home till we were at tea. "I tell you what, mother," he said, coming in and stamping his big feet till every dish on the table danced, "it's cold—cold. I thought I never see them cattle walk so slow afore as they did to-night. I went go to the Falls again with 'em such a day as this, if Kate's leg don't get well for six weeks. Has she had any oats, to-night?"

"Yes, yes, John," said Mrs. Marvin; "you always think there's nothin' done, if you aint here. Hear any news over to the falls?"

"Yes," said John, "they're all excited over there about Dan Lowell. He came home from Lynn, the other day, said he didn't feel very well, and his mother thought he appeared like a fever, and sent for Dr. Cane, and they say it's turned out the small pox. They've all got it down to Lynn. I don't know what

they'll do at Dan's, for nobody'll go there, of course, and his mother's a feeble old woman, you know."

I suppose there was more said, but I don't think I heard it. I don't, indeed, remember anything more, until I stood in my own room, and it might have been eight o'clock. I scraped away a little place in the frost and looked out of my window. The moonlight lay cold and bright on the snowfields that stretched away to the blue, frosty sky, glittering with ten thousand stars.

"I will," I said, "I will, if I freeze."

I put on my cloak, and my shawl over that, and my hood and mittens, and stole down the stairs and out into the stinging night.

It was five miles to Dan's, but I was a strong girl and a great walker. John Marvin's horse was lame, and if she hadn't been he wouldn't have taken me, I knew, me that they all thought didn't care a straw for Dan.

I never shall forget that walk. I didn't meet so much as a dog on the road. Every creature was housed but me. Cold! cold! everything was cold—the sky, the stars above me, the snow beneath me, the air around me—my face, my hands, my feet, my very heart, even, for fever chills like frost. The cold bit, and stung, and nipped, like some wild beast of icy fang and tooth. Still I walked on and on. And now I didn't feel so cold. Was it growing warmer? What made me so sleepy? O, if I could only lie down and go to sleep. If I could only rest a few minutes, for surely it was warmer now. Everything grew dim, and vague, and far away—even Dan and his danger. Now the whole world seemed to swim and float. I must, I *must* sit down.

God only knows what heavenly messenger he sent to me at this moment in the shape of memory. Like an arrow, a little sentence that I had read sometime suddenly pierced my misty brain—"When a person is near freezing he becomes drowsy. To yield to this for a moment is death."

I roused myself with a mighty effort of my almost conquered will, and I ran—ran as well as I could with my benumbed feet—for my life, and I never stopped, or bated my pace, till I was at Dan's door.

There was a light in an upper room, and I did not knock, but went straight in and up to the chamber.

Dan was lying in the bed. He was asleep, and his face was white and smooth as it ever was.

His mother was sitting by the bed, and she rose up as I came in. "For Heaven's sake, Lina Bent," she said, in a whisper, "where have you come from, and for what?"

"They said Dan had the small pox," I said, faintly, "and I've walked from the Cross Roads."

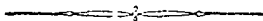
She lifted her hands. "This bitter night!" she said. "Poor child! poor child! And he hasn't got it, no more than you have. Just escaped a fever. Just because somebody in Lynn has got the small pox they must set the story going that Dan's got it."

And she began to take off my shoes and stockings, and when my feet were bare I looked down and saw a great tear fall from her eyes on them, but I never felt it, nor the touch of her hands, nor knew whether the water was hot or cold she put them in.

And I never walked on my feet again till there was green grass on the ground instead of snow.

I don't know as anybody will care to know how Dan and I made up, so long as we did, of course. But I believe I said something somewhere about going down on my knees to beg Dan's forgiveness; but though I hope I'm cured of some of my foolish vanity, I'm proud enough yet, and I can't let you think I did that, when it was Dan instead. For he wouldn't hear a word from me, but took all the blame to himself for being too proud to ask an explanation.

"Not one word, my poor little Lina," he said. "Poor little feet, frozen for me!" And there, on his knees, he kissed them, boots and all.



LITTLE BELL.

BY MRS. H. L. REDLON.

"Early to bed and early to rise
Will make you healthy, and wealthy, and wise."

LITTLE BELL had heard this till she began to think seriously of it, so she astonished her mother very much one evening by coming before sunset to have her clothes unfastened, and that was all the assistance little Bell needed about undressing.

Soon as the tired little head lay on its pillow almost, Bell was asleep, for though she tried hard to keep awake and think of something, she could not keep the blue eyes open.

It was quite dusk when she awoke, but she knew it was morning, for she heard the farm fowls crowing in the yard, and she sprang out of bed as lightly as a kitten.

She slipped her clothes on, but could not button them behind, so off they came again in a twinkling, and putting them on wrong side before, she fastened them and ran out into the yard. The door was locked but she could turn the key, and when she got outside she looked around with a very satisfied expression on her chubby face.

"I am glad nobody is up to keep me at home," thought she. "Now, I'll go where I please, and I'll find something pretty, I know."

The east was growing red, and off little Bell started for the woods as fast as she could run. When she got near she stopped, and then went on slowly, but even her soft little feet on the ground had aroused and alarmed something there. A little squirrel put his head out from among the low branches of a tree, and looked earnestly at her.

"O, you pretty thing!" said little Bell. "I wish you would come down here and let me take you. I would not squeeze the breath out of you, but *just hold you easy*."

The squirrel came a little lower down, and sat looking at her, with his graceful wide tail laid over against his back, and chattered a little.

"O, you pretty squirrel," said Bell; "I will come again and bring you some nuts. Now, good-by, squirrel," as the little fellow ran up the tree, and the tiny adventurer went on.

Sweet thin voices were whispering all around her as if the trees were talking together. Soon she came across something in her path, green and shining.

"Is it a rush?" she thought, stopping. Up looked two bright eyes at her, out went a red

forked tongue, and she knew it was a snake.

"O, you pretty, *pretty* thing," said Bell; "if mother had not told me never to touch a snake, I'd certainly put you in my pocket. How early you get up, and how handsome and bright you look! What do you eat, I wonder?"

But the snake was probably more afraid of Bell than she was of him, and still keeping up that wicked-looking head glided gracefully away.

"If my mother would let me, I would take you, you pretty, *pretty* thing."

Just as he went out of sight, she heard a little sound in the tree above her, and looking up she saw a bird sitting on her nest, and looking over the edge at her. Three little heads peeped out from under her wing.

"O birdies," said Bell, "how cunning you are! Why don't you get up? It is morning."

But the old bird covered them with her wing, and looked at the little girl with her pretty bright eyes, as if to ask her what she wanted.

"Good birdie, I wont hurt your young ones, but I do want to see them. Wont you let them fly a little?"

The old bird sang her song, and flew out upon a bough bending near, and the little birds—one—two—three—four—put up their heads and peeped over the edge of the nest at the little girl.

"Good birdie, I wont hurt them. How cunning they are! Now, good-by, and when I come again I'll bring them something."

So off she ran towards home.

"There comes the sun, all bleeding. I wonder if it will warm me; I'm cold."

She ran as fast as the little bare cold feet could go, and when she stepped into the warm kitchen where the breakfast was steaming on the table, she was in a fine glow.

"Why, Bell, where have you been?" asked her mother.

"In the woods," said Bell.

"Johnny has gone up stairs to call you. I thought you were asleep."

"O no, mother. I'm not going to lie in bed mornings any more. Everything looks pretty in the morning. Don't the breakfast look nice?"

Early to bed and early to rise

Will make you healthy, and wealthy, and wise."

LITTLE KENA FINDS A HOME.

BY KATE SEAFOAM.

"But you see it is John's child, Nat, and somehow I can't make it seem right to send her away so—and to the poorhouse, too." And then good tender-hearted Mrs. Jones hid her tremulous face in her apron, crying softly.

"Well, why not, I'd like to know? I suppose you think I can take care of all the young ones in town on a dollar and a half a day, don't you?" Mr. Jones asked, harshly.

"Why, no, no, Nat," she replied, tearfully, scarcely able to speak.

"Well, I guess I know I can't nor shan't; so that ends the matter. I've enough of my own to take care of, and—"

"But you know it takes but little for her, Nat; she's a small eater, and the clothes she's got will last her a year with care and mending, and she's so careful, you know; and little Willie only eats a little bread and milk each day, and Kena, bless her, dear soul! takes all the care of him, she's such a thoughtful motherly little thing," Mrs. Jones concluded, tenderly, affectionately, interrupting her husband, making the last plea for the sweet little orphan who seemed as near to her as her own children.

"As far as the baby boy, I don't mind keeping him so much, as ours are all girls; I reckon keeping him as our own, perhaps. He's a smart little fellow, and I kinder like him. Then I don't want to be too hard on you to once, Mary, and I suppose, as he's so good, you can manage to take care of

him and do the work, too," Mr. Jones said, in a gentler tone.

"I can take care of the dear little creature well enough, but it does seem too bad to part them, they are so fond of each other; I do believe 'twill nearly kill poor Kena to take her away from the baby and send her to the—"

"There, there, Mary, you needn't say anything more, as there's been enough said, and you know my mind about it. All you've got to do is to have her ready to start early in the morning. You'd oughter known better than to have taken the young ones here in the first place, to make me all this trouble, John's children or not, so see that you have her ready."

"O, it don't seem as if I ever could do it, Nat, when I promised their poor mother when she was dying that I would take them and do by them just as if they were my own!" And the distressed woman raised her tearful face pleadingly to her husband.

"You shouldn't have promised any such thing; you are always doing some such thing, letting your feelings get the better of you—your heart run away with your head, else you might do quite well. You ought to know better," her husband answered, petulantly, turning towards the outer door, evidently very ill at ease himself, yet feeling unwilling to own it even to himself that he was not doing just right, as he walked slowly to the stable.

Mr. Jones was a steady, hard-working, but very selfish man, unwilling to make the least sacrifice for others. And what made this decision of his to send little Kena, her beloved younger brother's child, to the poorhouse seem more cruel to his wife, was the fact well known to him as well as to herself, that she earned with her needle, beside caring for her family, more than enough weekly to meet the extra expense of the little orphan; and yet he talked as if the burden fell wholly upon him, and she had greatly wronged him by promising their dying mother that she would take the little ones.

John Parks was ill and unable to do any work for nearly a year before his death, which occurred about a year previous to his wife's, so the little they had was expended during their illness, and the orphans were left really destitute.

As Mr. Jones turned from the house, a little crouching figure crept swiftly away from beneath the open window near which they sat while talking, around to the other side of the house; then it stood still a moment, screened from Mr. Jones's view behind a clump of tall lilac bushes at the side entrance. As soon as he entered the stable little Kena ran softly into the house, a wild startled look in her soft eyes, her little brown hands tightly clenched. About half way up the narrow stairs leading to the small chamber occupied by her and the baby brother, she stopped a moment, listening to the low sobs, for Mrs. Jones was still crying, and her face grew very sad as she turned back a step as if she would go to her; then hesitating, she went slowly up the stairs, and softly entered the small room where little Willie was sleeping. A pretty picture it was; and in spite of her distressed feelings, the love of everything beautiful in thoughtful little Kena's heart quickly responded as she looked at the sleeping child. A pleased look came to her sad face, and stooping over the little bed she kissed him softly, fondly. He was a very pretty child, bright and winsome. As he lay now sleeping sweetly, one bare white arm, so plump and soft, was thrown carelessly above his head, the little hand nearly hidden in the glossy mass of golden curls clustering around his fair dimpled face; the other still clasped tightly the brightly colored picture-book the school-teacher had given little Kena.

Then Kena drew her little form up to its full height, and a very defiant look changed the tender face, as she clasped her hands closely and said:

"I wont go, so there now! They shan't take me away from my dear little Willie, for didn't poor mamma tell me to take care of him always, and be real good to him? And how can I, if they carry me off to that old poorhouse? I wont go to that hateful place, I wont! Like enough they've got an old dancing Jack there, just as they had to the one that Anna Adams's father keeps; and I was awful 'fraid of him when Anna took me up stairs to see him, if she did laugh at him. Why, 'twas awful to see him keep dancing up and down again all the time, talking, laughing, and rolling his big eyes, and showing his long teeth in that crazy way! I'd be just scared to death to stay in the house with such a creature; and then I can't take care of baby Willie, either. O, I can't, I can't go! I wish the good Lord had taken us, too, when he took pa and ma, and not left us here where folks don't like to keep us." And crying softly, still mindful in her grief of baby Willie, poor little Kena threw herself upon the floor beside the bed, where she lay sobbing till a babyish voice called, shrilly:

"Willie wants to dit up, 'Ena! Take Willie up, 'Ena!"

Kena wiped her eyes quickly and took him in her arms, pressing him so closely to her that he cried out:

"You pinch, 'Ena! You pinch Willie!"

"Well, 'Ena wont pinch Willie any more. Poor Willie!" Kena answered, tearfully.

Then she sat down by the window with him, and showed him the bright pictures, and read the story of "Little Red Riding Hood," which he seemed never to tire of hearing and questioning her about in his queer way. And in her care for him, listening to his gay prattle, Kena forgot for a while her grief, and the traces of weeping had left her face when Mrs. Jones called the children to supper, although she looked very thoughtful and sad.

There was but little supper eaten by the family that night. Mrs. Jones could scarcely keep the tears back every time she looked at Kena, and Mr. Jones felt very uncomfortable, while their three children, usually quite boisterous, with the susceptibility of childhood shared the general depression, and were very quiet.

Little Kena took Willie to their room very early. She could not bear to stay near Mr. Jones, or have baby Willie with him, and all of the time she was dreading, fearing her aunt would tell her she was to be taken to the poorhouse, and she did not feel as if she could hear it mentioned again. She undressed Willie, and lying down beside him she sang softly to him until he went to sleep, holding her hand closely in his. Kena lay very quiet then for more than two hours, her face turned toward the window, into which the round full moon was shining brightly, her eyes fixed upon it in a determined stare, striving to keep awake. But although the resolute will was strong, the childish nature was weak, and the staring eyes grew dimmer, and at last closed wearily, and little Kena forgot her grief for a while in sleep.

The first faint streaks of dawn were tinging the east when Kena opened her eyes with a start, a sense of something unusual having occurred. Her first bewildered thought was of little Willie, so dear to her. He was there, the small dimpled hand still clasping hers; then gradually it all came to her. They were going to carry her away from her dear Willie to that horrid poorhouse in the morning! Why, it was morning now, and she had slept, she thought, wonderingly, slept when she should have been awake and doing what she had determined to do. She rose hastily but softly, and crept easily down stairs, returning quickly with a cup of milk and some cookies. She sat down beside little Willie and passed her hand gently over his curls many times, touched his cheeks, and lifted his little hands, striving to be very quiet and cautious, to waken him without startling him, that he need not cry out and waken the others; all the while her poor grieved heart was beating fearfully, impatiently, and she trembled with anxiety. The blue eyes opened widely, looking wonderingly in her face, then Willie said, quickly:

"'Ena up, Willie wants to dit up. Take Willie up, 'Ena."

"Yes, yes, Willie; 'Ena will take Willie up if he'll keep real still," Kena answers, tremulously.

"Willie will teep still, 'Ena. Din Willie take, 'Ena," the bright little boy answered, as softly as Kena had spoken herself, holding out his hand for a cake.

Kena gave him a cake and some milk, then she dressed him hurriedly and sat him down upon the bed. She then took her sack and hat from the closet, and with shaking hands put them on hastily, little Willie watching her curiously while he ate his cake. Then he held out his hands, saying:

"Willie wants to do. 'Ena take Willie."

"Yes, yes, dear, 'Ena will take Willie," she whispered.

Then she put on his cape and hat, put the cakes in her pocket, and in an anxious hurried way she told little Willie how quiet he must be, and he should go to walk with her and see lots of pretty things; but if he spoke or made any noise, they would take poor Kena away from Willie, and he couldn't see her again. He looked steadily in her face while she was talking to him, his pretty mouth quivering tremulously when she told him they would take her away from him. Then he nestled his curly head closely to her as he whispered:

"Willie teep still, stay 'Ena, see pretty things."

Kena kissed him fondly, and then he lay very quiet while she carried him down the stairs, through the small kitchen, and softly drawing the bolt of the outer door, they passed out.

Mr. Jones was not an early riser, and this morning the family slept later than usual, and Mrs. Jones, with a very sad face, hurriedly prepared the breakfast. She delayed calling Kena until the others were ready to take their places at the table, dreading to see the child to whom she must tell such unwelcome news, wishing to put it off as long as possible. She went at length to the stairs and called to her twice, but received no answer; then she listened a moment, surprised that she did not hear little Willie's merry prattle as usual. Mr. Jones called impatiently, eager for his breakfast, and with a sigh of relief she turned to the table, Mr. Jones remarking that the children seemed uncommonly sleepy, as they took their seats at the table.

Nearly an hour later Mrs. Jones repeated her calls to little Kena with the same result, and then, with a strange feeling at her sad heart, she hastily ascended the stairs. She opened the chamber door, and stood gazing at the empty bed in astonishment a moment, then she ran down the

stairs and out to the stable, and in a tremulous, agitated way told Mr. Jones that the children were not in their chamber.

"Well, what of it? What are you scared about? Like enough the baby got restless, and she took him out doors somewhere," Mr. Jones carelessly replied, as he continued sawing the wood.

Mrs. Jones turned away, scarcely assured by this view of the matter, as it was unlike Kena, and her husband called to her, and told her she had better let the children hunt them up, while she sewed some buttons on his old coat; adding, "And then you tell her where she's to go, and mind, I won't have no whimpering from her about it!"

Mrs. Jones sent two of the children in search of the missing little ones, and with a deeply troubled heart sat down to her mending. After loitering around some time the children returned without finding Kena and Willie, and Mrs. Jones hastened to send them to school, fearing they would be late. Then Mr. Jones came in, and was much surprised to learn that they could not find the missing ones. But when his wife anxiously proposed that they should go in search of them, he surlily replied, that he had better business than running around after other folks' young ones; if they were really gone for good—and he very much doubted that, as "a bad penny always returns," and there was no such good luck as that for him—why, it would save him a good deal of trouble, and she need not think him fool enough to go after them. So Mrs. Jones sadly continued her work until her husband left; then she searched hastily and anxiously for the children till it was time for her to return to the house to prepare dinner, wondering all the while what caused Kena to leave in such a manner, till she was forced to conclude that she must have overheard their talk, and learned what they intended to do with her.

"Poor child!" she murmured, tenderly. "No wonder she left. O, if I only could know where she is! I am so worried about her!"

But the day passed, and night came on, and still they did not return; and Mrs. Jones's tender heart was so filled with anxious fear for the missing children that she could not sleep.

"Please, sir, be you the doctor?"

Mr. Arthur Brown, returning from the city, riding slowly along, whistling merrily, looked curiously down, with an amused smile upon his genial countenance, at the childish imploring face raised to him as these words were tremulously spoken.

"The doctor, sis? Why, what made you think I was a doctor, little sober-face?" he asked, laughingly.

But the little sober face was instantly hidden in the small brown hands, and the little girl began to cry bitterly. Good-hearted Mr. Brown sprang quickly from his carriage, and laying his hand softly upon the little girl's head, he said, soothingly:

"Why, what is it, dear? Are you sick? I'm not a doctor, but I can get one for you, so don't cry so."

Then she lifted her tearful eyes to him, and said:

"I'm not sick, sir, but O! little Willie, he's so dreadful sick, I know, and I can't do anything for him; and—and I'm afraid he'll die, like mamma, and she'll think I didn't take good care of him." And the little face was hidden again as she began to cry.

Mr. Brown soothed her again, assuring her he would do all that he could for little Willie, and take good care of him, if she wouldn't cry so.

"And where is little Willie?" he asked, in surprise, looking around him.

He was still more surprised when, taking his hand, she led him from the road, through the bars, and a short distance along by the high stone wall which enclosed the pasture, stopping beside a bed of leaves, upon which lay, sleeping, apparently, a child; the prettiest one, Mr. Brown thought, that he had ever seen, fever-stricken though it was, moaning fitfully in its restless sleep. He looked long and earnestly down upon the child, and the little girl asked sobbingly:

"He won't die, will he, sir? You'll get the doctor, won't you?"

"Yes, dear," he answered, assuringly. "But where is your home, little one? How came the baby here?" he asked.

"They—he didn't want me there, and—and I couldn't leave little Willie, because mother told me to always take care of him; and I can't if they make me go there, can I?" she said, pleadingly.

"Certainly not; so you'd better not leave

him, dear," he answered, smiling in the pleading face.

"And I don't want to go to the poor-house, and I won't; would you?" she asked, her face brightening at his assuring smile.

"So they were going to carry you *there*, little lady? No, I wouldn't go there if I were you. You took baby and gave them the slip, eh?" patting her head as he continued, "You're a smart little girl, I know; and now we must see what we can do for this little fellow." And he took little Willie tenderly in his arms, carrying him towards the carriage.

"But what are you going to do with him?" Kena asked, timidly.

"I will take you both to a good home, a kind lady who will take good care of you—not to the poorhouse—if you will go with me," he answered, smilingly.

"O, will you? I am so glad!" little Kena said, eagerly. And she followed quickly after him to the carriage.

It was but a short drive to the fine residence where Mr. Brown dwelt with his kind-hearted mother. Little Kena was delighted at the fine prospect for a home, when they stopped before the house, and he said, cheerily, as he sprang from the carriage:

"Now, then! Here we are, at home, little miss." And he took baby Willie from her arms, where he had lain so quietly, till she got out of the carriage.

A portly motherly-looking lady came to the door, and stood looking in surprise at them as they passed up the broad walk through the large garden.

"See what I've brought you, mother," Mr. Brown said, gayly, as he stood beside her. "Quite a little brood, isn't it, mother?" he continued; then laughed loudly at her look of puzzled astonishment.

"Bless me, Arthur! who are they? What does it mean?" the lady cried out, looking curiously at the children.

"That's what I'm going to let you find out, mother. All I can tell you is that they are poor little wayfarers, runaways—at least this little lady—spunky as can be; ran away, and took baby along with her, and he's really sick, I guess. I found them about a mile above here. She thought I was the doctor, you see." And he laughed heartily again at the idea, while his mother quickly turned back the corner of the

light cape with which Kena had carefully shaded Willie's face, then starting back, she exclaimed:

"Sick! Why, Arthur, he's a very sick child! His face is just as red as can be, and his breathing is so hurried! Why, child, how came you to take that child out—away from home, when he is so sick?" she asked, turning sharply to trembling little Kena; then to her son she said, sternly, "Now, Arthur Brown, as you are not a doctor, how do you know what you have brought home? Perhaps that child has got the small-pox, wandering around the Lord only knows where, and you've brought them here."

Little Kena, who had a great fear and dread of the terrible disease, began to cry bitterly, clinging to Mr. Brown, who still held Willie; but he said, coolly, an amused look upon his kindly face:

"O well, mother, I couldn't say but what he has got the small-pox; but as you have kept us standing here at the door—have not admitted us—you see you are all right, and I'll take the poor little chits to the poorhouse; it isn't a great ways, you know, and—"

But his words were drowned in the dismal heart-broken cry which poor little Kena uttered at that dreadful word, and then she screamed loudly, "O don't! O don't!"

"There, there, child! Don't, O don't cry so!" Mrs. Brown exclaimed, wringing her hands in a distressed way. "Why, Arthur Brown, what a brute you are! See how you've made that child cry! To the poorhouse, indeed! Bring that poor dear baby right in here this minute, and go for the doctor just as quick as you can, will you? Do you hear? Just as if I'd be so heathenish as to have that dear pretty baby carried about as sick as that!" she murmured, as she moved briskly through the hall to the cosy sitting-room, followed by her son, whose face wore a most complacent, knowing look.

Little Kena followed timidly after them in a bewildered way, scarcely able to believe that this kind lady who now spoke so softly, arranged the pillow, and placed poor Willie so gently, tenderly, upon the soft lounge, was the one who had frightened her so at the door.

But the unpleasant remembrance was wholly obliterated before Mr. Brown returned with the doctor; as, while he was

gone, the lady had given her food and drink, then questioned her, and listened as tenderly to her sad story, caressed her as fondly as her own mother could have done; and but for the anxiety she felt about poor Willie she would have been quite happy.

The physician pronounced Willie's disease scarlatina. After the sick child was put to bed and medicine given, Mrs. Brown left little Kena with him while she went to her son and told him Kena's story, ending:

"And to think that poor child has travelled so far, slept out in the pasture with that sick baby, afraid to go near a house, because she thought they'd carry her back to those people! But I suppose we must write to them, and let them know where the children are; for it seems the woman was fond of them, and I think the little girl is correct in the address; so you had better write them a few words, Arthur."

"Then you wont have them taken to the poorhouse, will you, mother?" he asked, teasingly.

"To the poorhouse! It was you who made that cruel proposition, sir! I shall keep them, if I can, for you know I've been quite lonely since your sister Ada married, and they'll not go to the poorhouse, I'll assure you!" she answered, emphatically.

So little Kena had found kind friends and a pleasant home. With the best motherly care little Willie soon recovered, and the children were very happy in their new home, and became very fond of their loving mamma and big brother Arthur, as they were taught to call them; and Mrs. Brown often said to her son and neighbors that nothing would tempt her to part with her dear children as long as she could keep them; "for it seems quite like having Ada and Arthur with me again as babies," she concluded.

It was a great relief to poor Mrs. Jones's

anxious heart when, after several days of distress on their account, she received the kind considerate letter written by Arthur Brown, telling her all about the missing children, and inviting her to visit them. Although she missed them much, she was content to leave them in a better home, where they could be so well cared for; thankful for the kind providence which had so tenderly guarded and guided the little wanderers.

LITTLE LIZZIE'S GRIEF.

BY KATE SEAFOAM.

LITTLE ROBIN REDBREAST joined his plaintive song with the bluebird's merry chatter, and sang a most joyous roundelay in the maples in front of little Lizzie Avery's pleasant home, filling the air with soft melody this sunny May morning.

The gentle breeze lifted the rich lace curtains, and gave the birds many sly glances into the bright cosy sitting-room, where the sunlight fell goldenly over richly-carved furniture and softly-tinted pictures—fair dreams of other lands, sweet home scenes and lovely portraitures—and then lay in ruddy bands across the flowery carpet, dropping a golden sheen over blue-eyed Lizzie's flossy curls, as she lay on a soft divan, her face buried in her dainty little handkerchief, which was wet with her fast-falling tears. In fact, it was a beautiful morning, all of her surroundings were richly pleasant, and yet, wholly indifferent to nature's loveliness and the bird's merry enticing calls, Lizzie lay there and cried as if her heart would break; and, I grieve to tell it, all this heart-touching grief and unthankfulness was, as we learn from her sobbing incoherent words, on account of a willful desire for a new dress, to wear at a party to be given in honor of this grieved, indignant little lady's eleventh birthday.

"I know ma could get it just as well as not, and as for that plaid, I've worn it ever so many times to parties and to two dances, and I don't care how pretty it looks, I think it's quite a shabby affair, and—and"—then a most pitiful sobbing—"Dora Cleaves has got ever so many more dresses than I have; and she's going to have a new poplin and a new necklace. O dear! I do think it is real mean and stingy; and if I can't have a new poplin, I—I don't want any party, there, now!"

Miss Lizzie sat up very straight, threw her handkerchief nearly across the pleasant room, and stamped her small foot so loudly that the beautiful robin who sat nearest the open window, swinging lightly upon a slender bough, and chirping so cheerily, fluttered in a frightened manner, and gave a quick glance at the window, then set his cunning little head on one side, and looked knowingly at the sprightly little bluebirds, as they ceased their merry chattering and huddled

closely together, looking inquiringly at robin, wondering what this unusual disturbance in the pleasant place they loved so well could mean this bright day. Then, with a little impatient twitter, he spread his downy wings and flew swiftly away, followed by all the other birds, just as Lizzie's mother entered the room, her still fair face disturbed. Looking sadly at Lizzie a moment, she drew a deep sigh, and then espying the soiled handkerchief on the carpet, she said:

"Why, Lizzie! what miserable behaviour; what an ungrateful child you are! You well know that your dresses are quite good enough, and I have told you that owing to your father's failing health, and some losses in business, it is necessary that we should economize a little this season, as I am quite willing to do. It is your duty to acquiesce without a murmur or a question; and even were there no such reason, I certainly should not gratify you, as I cannot, in this world of suffering, where we ought to relieve all we can, allow or yield to extravagance."

Lizzie tossed her head impatiently, and her mother concluded:

"Go to your room immediately, Lizzie, and remain there until I call you. You have behaved most improperly. Do not let me hear another word about a dress; if you do, I shall feel obliged to punish you more severely. And, indeed, if the invitations were not already sent, you should not have a party. Take your handkerchief and go to your room."

Lizzie sulkily obeyed. Sobbing fretfully again, she ascended the stairs and entered such a pleasant room as one would think any little girl would be delighted with, and could not fail to be happy in. But Lizzie banged the door so violently after her that a dainty little vase filled with flowers fell from a bracket beside it, and was broken in pieces. Muttering crossly, "I don't care if 'tis broken!" she threw herself upon the soft white bed, still crying bitterly. Thus an hour or more passed, the balmy silence occasionally broken by sobs, which grew less frequent, when suddenly there was a little flutter of downy wings and a soft plaintive twitter at the open window. Lizzie looked

up quickly, and saw a large robin perched on the window-sill, his little brown head set jauntily to one side, and his small beadlike eyes twinkling merrily as he looked so knowingly at her, and softly chirped again.

"What do you want?" Lizzie asked, impatiently, as she slightly rose and turned her flushed face towards the window.

"What do I want, little lady? Rather, what do *you* want? Ah, my dear little girl, you have shed too many tears already for so trivial a matter as a new dress. Why, Gambolea, nimble as she is, has been as busy as she could be all this bright morning gathering them up, they have fallen so fast."

"Gambolea? Who is that? There has not been any one here this morning," Lizzie said, in surprise, as she sat up straight, and the gentle wind quickly dried the tears on her face.

Robin dodged his head a little to one side and looked earnestly out of the window a moment, then turning to Lizzie, he said, in a chirping manner:

"Gambolea! why, you have just released her from duty, and I hope she will not have to gather any more tears this fair day, as she has enough already to keep her sisters busy weaving for a week, and she looks quite weary. You see," Robin continued, in a knowing manner, "Gambolea grew lazy and fretful—a reproach to her name—and spent her time in idle complaining and fretfulness, instead of thankfully performing her really pleasant duties, and so Queen Vestina was compelled to punish her, and this is her punishment: She is to busy herself in a certain portion of the earth which surrounds Queen Vestina's realm, in collecting all the tears of discontent and ungratefulness which shall fall from the eyes of mortals during the next year, unless she is released by the blending of some penitential ones, which shall fall from the softening of the obdurate heart ere the weeping shall cease. So you see, my dear, you might have made little Gambolea very happy, given her back to cheerful society, if you would have listened to my song, in which I did my best to soften your ungrateful heart, and bring you to contemplate the beauties around you, to cause you to realize your unreasonableness, to drop if but one tear of penitence and regret to relieve Gambolea, who is a favorite of mine, from further punishment. But you frightened me so, when you threw her so violently in your handkerchief, that I flew away; and

when, at her request, I came again to aid her, you only answered my cheerful salute with impatient questions; and poor Gambolea has borne your cruel tears away. Ah, no! 'tis very sad. Yet still, I would like to help you to be happier, as I am very fond of the lovely maples in front of the house, and would like to build my soft nest there, if I knew you would not scare my little ones to death. We are cheerful creatures, and do not like fretting, and so Queen Vestina bade me conduct you to her palace this morning, as she has some fine pictures to show you. Come."

Quickly the scene changed, and Lizzie found herself in a beautiful palace, the splendor of which dazzled even her bright eyes, surrounded by busy little fairies, singing and flitting gracefully hither and thither, on fairy work intent. With a merry chirp Robin called the attention of Queen Vestina to wondering Lizzie.

"Ah, Robby," said a pleasant silvery voice, from the fairest among the fair, "so you've brought the little lady! Come hither, Prote mia, and take this little girl into the hall of Possibility, and let her look at the pictures she has incited our artist to sketch."

A little fairy more soberly dressed than the others, wearing a tiara of dark-hued stones, lightened by two milk-white lucent pearls, came quickly at the summons, and taking Lizzie's hand, led her into a wide dreary-looking hall. She lifted a misty veil, and Lizzie started back with a grieved cry as her eye rested upon a bed coarsely, thinly covered, upon which lay a feeble attenuated man, whom she recognized as a worn semblance of her once robust father.

"O father!" Lizzie cried, in a wailing voice. And quickly Prote mia dropped the filmy screen and raised another.

This time Lizzie saw in the background her warm pleasant home, and nearer a bare cheerless room; no fire was on the dreary hearth; rags filled the broken windows; and through many a chink and cranny the chilly snow sifted and made white cheerless little heaps on the bare battered floor. Beside the cheerless hearth crouched a little girl, her face blue and pinched with the cold; her thin garments, soiled and ragged, she held closely around her trembling form, vainly striving to gain warmth from them. Near her sat a pale careworn woman, and as Lizzie looked she raised her bowed head, and in the hollow eyes that gazed wistfully at her,

Lizzie was loth to recognize her dear mother's brilliant ones; but the sad plaintive voice she knew full well, as it said:

"See, my dear child, what your lot might have been; see what many have suffered during the past inclement season, while you have been graciously permitted to enjoy the many comforts of a luxurious home, which blessings you have, alas! most ungratefully abused."

"O, I'm so sorry, ma! I—I don't want to see any more. I'm so sorry!" Lizzie cried, pitifully. And Prote mia dropped the veil. Looking tearfully at her, Lizzie was astonished to see one of the dark murky stones, which seemed as a blot in the flara, beside the pure pearl, drop instantly, and in its place another pearl, purer, more brilliant, if possible, than the others. Prote mia's sad face grew radiant with a beaming smile, and a gentle hand smoothed back the tangled curls from Lizzie's heated forehead, as a soft voice said:

"What is it, my dear? were you dreaming? Come, your father has returned and is asking for you, Lizzie. I came to call you once before, but you were sleeping. You have slept the bright morning nearly away."

"O ma, I'm so sorry I was so cross, and—and I know I've got dresses enough. Some little girls can't have enough to keep them warm."

"Very true, my dear; and I am glad you have concluded thus wisely," her mother answered, tenderly, as she smoothed her curls. And looking up wonderingly, Lizzie asked:

"Was I dreaming, ma? and is pa well?"

"Why, yes, my child, your father is as well as he was yesterday, and I hope with needed relaxation from business a while, he will recover his usual health. I think you were dreaming; you were very restless when I wakened you. Now we will go to your father," Mrs. Avery replied, looking intently at Lizzie's thoughtful face.

"But it all seems so real, ma; it does not seem like a dream, at all," Lizzie said, musingly, passing her hand thoughtfully over her fair forehead.

"No doubt, my dear; dreams often seem quite real," her mother absently replied, as they entered the sitting-room.

"Why, Lizzie, you look as demure and wise as an owl this bright day," Mr. Avery said, laughingly. "Here is a letter from your cousin Ada. She will be here in season for the party. Just look at that beautiful large robin in the maples. I wish he'd build his nest there this season. I have a great fancy for merry robin redbreast," Mr. Avery concluded, heartily.

Lizzie crossed the room to the window, and looked curiously out at Robin, and then said, positively:

"Yes, he will build his nest there, I know, pa," nodding her head wisely. "And I am going to be real good."

Mr. Avery laughed, and replied:

"Well, if her owlship says so, of course it must be so; and we'll heartily welcome the little fledgelings."

LITTLE NOLL

BY M. A. ALDEN.

NOLL was the oldest of quite a large family, and although a delicate sensitive child, much looked up to and depended upon by his little brothers and sister. When, therefore, he fell from a ladder one day, rendering himself a cripple for days to come, perhaps for life, it was a sad time for all, and if it had not been for Noll's teacher, Miss Ernestine Strathmay, the poor little fellow would have had a weary time of suffering and poverty, as well as those who loved him. Miss Strathmay's uncle was a physician, a kind-hearted gentleman, who at once took an interest in his niece's unfortunate little pupil.

So it happened that in time Noll became dearer to Miss Strathmay than any one else in the world, and he loved her with an almost equal love. He lived with her, and she was unwilling to have him return to his home, making his lameness her excuse and his.

But Noll was an earnest little fellow, and sometimes he would steal his hand into Miss Strathmay's and ask her if it were not nearly time for him to begin to be something beside a baby and a trouble to other people.

"A trouble, Noll!"

"It seems as if I were."

"Never to me, or to any one, I am willing to assure you, my darling."

"I am afraid I shall never be of much use to anybody," said Noll, his lip quivering.

"And I am sure you will always be of use to me," said Miss Strathmay, "and to my uncle."

You are right there, Tina," said Dr. Shyler. "I am sure I do not know what we should do without Noll. Why, the child is crying! What is the matter?"

"Nothing," said Noll.

This was always a final reply with Noll, Tina knew, and she did not urge him to any other, but she said:

"Listen, Noll, and I will tell you something that will dry your tears, my darling. Something that ought to make us both very happy."

Noll looked up with a wistful wise look into Tina's face.

"Would you like to go away?" asked Tina.

"Away from here?" asked Noll.

"No, dear, go with me to a beautiful place, where you can look out of your window at the white waves."

"Go to the sea?" asked Noll, delightedly, clapping his hands.

"Yes," said Tina, smiling at his delight.

"You and I together. We can walk along the beach and pick up shells."

"Pink and blue ones?"

"Yes, and white pearly ones."

"O," said Noll, delightedly, "do you really mean that we are going?"

"Yes. My uncle has given me for my birthday present a sum of money sufficient for the purpose."

"O, you mustn't spend your money to make a baby of me," said Noll, with a quaint dignity and a sort of care-taking manner.

"I have a right once in a while to indulge myself, Noll. And in this instance I must not be put off."

Tina fancied having the child dictate to her. It was pleasant to be governed by his childish words. He was her little judge in the affairs of her life. At least, she always asked Noll's advice, having taken her own previously, and Noll, being a wise little fellow, generally divined what that had been.

But now Tina was determined to indulge herself, and Dr. Shyler heartily approved.

"Stay all summer," he said. "I prescribe it for you and Noll. If you come back before the leaves begin to turn in the September woods, I shall send you right back again."

Noll was in ecstasies when he found himself with Tina in a little room whose windows looked directly over rocks that peered sharply above the seething, boiling foam of the waves.

"O Miss Ernest," he said, "shall we go down to it, and may I dip my hands and my feet into it?"

"Yes, your whole little self," said Ernestine, "but not until to-morrow morning."

They were the only ones staying as yet at the little cottage where they were, and, after tea, they wandered solitary on the beach and among the rocks, and watched the moon come up over the water, Noll clapping his hands to see the long rippling path of light that stretched over the waves.

Tina heard it nearly all the night for she lay wakeful, sometimes rising gently from her bed and starting to the window to catch the inspiration of the hour.

In the morning, she allowed him to dress in his fancy bathing-suit, and before breakfast to go down among the rocks and clinging to their sides suffer the rough waves to break over him. How he screamed with delight, and how he laughed when he stood dripping and shivering in a sheltered cove, to doff his wet clothing and don the dry. Then a brisk run home to a breakfast of smoking griddle-cakes and fried fish.

Noll was a little lame still, but he could run faster than Ernestine, though he could endure less. Their rambles on the beach always left him tired and listless. Ernestine was troubled about him. She had hoped the sea breeze would fan new color into his cheeks, but they were a long time about it, and the weeks stole by, leaving him pale still, though active, and as happy as she could wish.

Now people came and went, but she and Noll kept to themselves, until one night there entered the dining-room just as they were all seated at tea, a gentleman and lady with whom Miss Strathmay was acquainted. They had arrived somewhat unexpectedly, and she had not known of their coming, and she felt at once a shadow creep over her happiness, and drew Nell's chair a little nearer to her side.

Mr. Henstone's eyes wandered round the table, and Tina felt them rest on her. She bowed nervously. Then he and his sister came and claimed acquaintance with her.

"Are you the only one here?" he asked.

"Yes," said Tina, "I and my little boy, Noll." And she placed her hand tenderly on Noll's head.

"Your little boy?" repeated Miss Henstone, questioningly.

"Yes," said Tina, smiling, and she related how Noll had come to her notice.

"O," said Miss Henstone; then she and her brother seated themselves at the table some distance from Tina, and little more was said between them.

Tina wished to avoid them, for Miss Henstone's presence was sufficient to render her uncomfortable, remembering as she did how, during a long stay at Dr. Shyler's, she had contrived to make it, for her, a time long to be remembered for unpleasantness.

But Miss Henstone was not so easily put off; she continually surprised Tina when she was strolling with Noll on the beach looking for shells, and picking up here and there a pebble or a shell, dropped them carelessly into the boy's hand.

Noll looked up with a pleased smile.

"Here," said Tina, quickly, handing him a shining pebble; "this is for you; see what a lovely color, Noll."

"Yes, and look at this she'll the lady gave me," said Noll, "see how pink!"

"I shall give you every pretty one I find," said Miss Henstone. And it seemed to Tina that all the pretty ones fell to her share, and that she gave Noll half a dozen to her giving him one.

As the days went by Miss Henstone gained more and more in Noll's affections, and Tina saw with a secret bitterness of heart her cherished darling—hers—turning to Miss Henstone instead of herself, with his glad eyes and winning smile.

Tina could not believe that Miss Henstone really cared for him; it seemed as if she only

wished, if possible, to get Noll away from her, and this made it all the harder for her to endure. In this she was a little mistaken; Miss Henstone really liked Noll. At first, perhaps she had played with him for the sake of some amusement, but Noll's artless innocence, and belief in her, fascinated her, and she loved him at last, if not as intensely, as much as Tina loved him.

As for Noll, his love for Tina had always been and always would be a kind of veneration; for Miss Henstone it was a delight unshadowed by the weight of any awe.

When Tina wished to have him to herself, and take his little hand in hers that they might wander off together in some serious mood, Miss Henstone was sure to engage him in a frolic, and Noll would sleep with a petulant merry smile on his face, instead of the wistful half sad smile that Tina liked so well.

She had half a mind to go home at first, but at the mention of it Noll's face grew so suddenly sober, and he pleaded so with his patient little eyes to remain, that for his sake she resolved to do so. For his sake she tolerated Miss Henstone, even tried to cultivate a liking for her. This generosity Miss Henstone did not at all appreciate. She said carelessly, one night:

"Let us run off to the beach before Miss Ernest comes."

"Before she comes?" said Noll, surprised.

"O, I forgot," said Miss Henstone, "she would not know where to find us."

"She might see us," said Noll; "but I guess we had better wait."

"You are a nice obedient child to Miss Strathmay," said Miss Henstone.

Noll's brow grew perplexed, he did not like Miss Henstone's praise.

"Why?" he asked.

"You do always exactly as she would have you do."

"O," said Noll, "I love her."

Miss Henstone stood tapping the sandy soil with her foot.

"What makes you love her?" she asked.

"I never thought," said Noll. "I loved her to begin with."

Miss Henstone ceased tapping with her foot.

"Did you love me to begin with?" she asked, suddenly.

Noll blushed and hesitated.

"No," said Miss Henstone, "I see that you did not. Do you love me now?"

"O yes," said Noll, "dearly!"

It was just as he was making this declaration, and just as Miss Henstone was stooping to kiss him, that Tina appeared. All the afternoon, she had been suffering from a severe headache brought on in the morning by finding Noll in Miss Henstone's room with a book of pictures in his lap, looking himself the picture of happiness and content. Her face flushed when she saw him kissing Miss Henstone, and she said, nervously:

"There, Noll, that is enough."

"No, it is not enough," said Miss Henstone. And she put both arms about the boy and kissed him again and again.

"Now we'll go down to the beach," said Noll, joyfully.

"I am not going to-night," said Tina.

"O," said Noll, in a disappointed tone.

"We've waited for you," said Miss Henstone.

"I am sorry," said Tina; "go now as fast as you can."

"But not without you," said Noll.

Tina could not resist the shade of triumph that stole into the smile with which she regarded him.

"Go with Miss Henstone," she said, pleasantly. "I will watch you from here."

"Why can't you come?" pleaded Noll.

"Never mind," said Miss Henstone, "I am going alone." And wrapping her bright shawl about her without looking back she took her way to the beach.

Noll gazed wistfully after her.

"Why do you not go with her?" asked Tina. "Run quickly; you can catch up with her."

Noll replied by putting his little hand into hers, with a nestling affectionate manner peculiar to him.

"Drather stay with you," he said

So he sat by her side in front of the little cottage, and watched the blue sea from a distance, and listened to the ceaseless thum, thum, thum of the breakers on the beach, and Tina told one of her best stories so that Noll's eyes shone as bright as the stars that, by-and-by, looked down at them from the sky, where strange clouds floated in grotesque shapes round the horizon, and up over the moon.

Miss Henstone staid a long time on the beach; when she returned, tears were in her eyes. Tina and Noll sat still outside the cottage wrapped in soft warm shawls. Miss Henstone paused to kiss Noll's forehead as she went in.

"Miss Strathmay," she said, "I never thought I should envy you anything; but I do envy you that boy's love."

Noll looked perplexedly from one to the other, and Tina's conscience smote her for her selfish jealousy.

The next day Noll stood with his hands in his pockets—which Tina had told him was improper—whistling, or trying to whistle—at which Mr. Henstone laughed.

They stood on the wharf, Mr. Henstone, an old sailor, and Noll.

"Ruther doubtful," said the old sailor, shaking his head as he surveyed the leaden sky and the sullen sea. "P'raps to-morrow—"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Henstone; "it'll be all the better fishing for being a trifle cloudy. What do you say, Noll, do you fear a little scurry over the waves?"

"That ben't the thing," said the old sailor, "it's portending a storm."

"We can go a little way out," said Mr. Henstone, "I am sure. Wont you take us?"

"O, if yer bent on it—it's none o' my 'fair only how. I ben't fraid of ole Davy."

"What do you say, Noll, will you go?"

"I'll run and ask Miss Ernest."

"O nonsense," said Mr. Henstone, "we can't wait for that!"

"I don't think she'd care," said Noll.

"She's willing I should go fishing."

"Goin' to take him?" asked the old sailor.

"Yes," said Mr. Henstone, carelessly.

Despite the sailor's warning he had little idea of the danger into which he was running.

Noll was not a bit seasick, nor was he a coward when the boat dipped and plunged, and the water more than once poured over the sides; for a great wind had risen, and presently the rain began to fall in torrents.

"A reg'lar gale," said the old sailor, and so it proved.

Tina heard the sleet dash suddenly against the window as she sat sewing buttons on to Noll's jacket, and expected every moment to hear Noll's feet pattering up the stairs.

When he did not come, and the storm increased, and she could hear the sea roaring sullenly, she laid down her sewing and went to look for him. In the sitting-room she found Miss Henstone walking up and down excitedly, and seeing Tina she sprang towards her eagerly.

"O," she said, "do you think they could have gone?"

"Who?" asked Tina, catching her alarm.

"Why, my brother and—and Noll?"

"Gone where?" asked Tina, more and more alarmed.

Miss Henstone could not reply at first.

"Out on the water," at length she said.

"O no," said Tina.

Yet it was too true, and for four terrible hours she and Miss Henstone listened to the pitiless storm with aching hearts. At last, with a great swoop, the wind, as it were with a mighty arm, swept the sky clear, and it smiled unblushingly upon the angry sea that growled as it sauk cowering back, leaving the beach strewn with the sad spoils of its prey.

A face calm as death could make it looked up at the smiling sky from the wave-washed beach. It was the face of the old sailor staring heavenward, whither his soul had gone in company with the soul of the young man and the little child who had been in the boat with him. Afterwards their bodies were washed on shore, also Mr. Henstone, with his black hair blown into his eyes, and Noll, with his yellow curls thrust back from his fair transparent brow. What were jealousies at a moment like this?

With breaking hearts Miss Henstone and Tina looked into the still faces of those they loved, and then pityingly into one another's eyes.

Miss Henstone's grief found easier vent than Tina's. She could weep at last, but not a tear dimmed Tina's eyes. She was conscious only of a terrible constant aching at her heart.

She stood alone gazing at her darling after they had laid him in his casket, with folded hands and the flowers about him.

"Will he look thus when he joins the angels?" she wondered. "Will he not remember me in that beautiful land whither he has gone?" she questioned.

Would he sometimes think amid his happiness of her, left lonely, and long to place his little hand lovingly in hers as of yore? Should she ever go to him?

At this question tears might have come to her eyes had not a holier feeling driven them away.

Why should she mourn for her treasure? Was he not more hers than ever now? And whither he had gone her heart would follow him.

Her thoughts were like a beautiful sunset to her; like a sunset at the end of a troubled day.

A great joy grew out of her great sorrow—the peace that surpasseth understanding. Life, with its thousand jarring, terrible discords, could not mar the music of her soul. Sometime it would be hers to enter the beautiful land where her darling was to live, to meet him there, not only him, but others as loving and lovable as he.

O, she could wait, for it was only a little while, compared with the eternity of the blessedness that she should obtain at last, God willing always if she willed.

Miss Henstone wondered when she parted from her, at the quiet though sad face that looked with such bright untroubled eyes into her own, weary with weeping.

"You have others," she said, "but my brother was all to me."

"Noll was dearer to me than a brother," said Tina, "and worse than death might have happened to him had he lived."

"What can be worse than death?" asked Miss Henstone. "What can be worse than to have those we love leave us—forever?"

"What can be happier than to have dear ones waiting for us beyond the gate of death?" asked Tina. "I think of Noll waiting for me. I think sometime of going to him. O, dear Miss Henstone, I sometimes think I am happier in his death than in his life! Heaven seems to me now a reality for which to live."

Miss Henstone accepted Tina's calm kind kisses, and felt soothed by what she said to her; but Tina's peace found no place yet within her troubled soul.

Perhaps a month hence she would smile

as well as Tina, if not as truly—smile because her grief was wearing into the grooves of life, and—her mourning was becoming.

Not that life would not teach her sometime to love a higher peace, but not at once, and trifles make our happiness or woe. A ray of light darts across a shadowy lake, perhaps, and the deep lake and the deep shadows are forgotten, and we watch and rejoice in the pranksome ray.

Miss Henstone, after her brother's funeral, which took place from the home where their childhood was spent, and which was now occupied by a far-away cousin, returned to Dr. Shyler's, where Tina had been ever after little Noll had been taken from her.

Noll's mother grieved sadly at the loss of her darling, although there were four others left, for whom she seemed to care just as dearly, Tina thought; and she wondered, with a strange mingling of selfishness and sorrow, how it would seem to her if she had none left, and never on earth could have another as dear as the one that was gone. Yet she would not call Noll back again even if she could.

No, not if to-morrow her wish would bring him with his wistful smiling face close to her side, she would not wish him back; not for the touch of his tiny lips upon her brow, nor the caress of his childish arms about her neck.

Call him back! O no. Noll was an angel, happy in heaven, happy forever with a happiness the shadow of which she had no power to give him. She would not call Noll back, not if she could.

LITTLE PANSIE'S EMERALDS.

BY EMMA GARRISON JONES.

ONE wintry afternoon in January, away up in the bleak attic of a wretched tenement house, a pale sad-eyed woman sat sewing. The garment upon which she was engaged was very rich and costly, being a handsome party dress. The twilight closed in rapidly, with a blinding fall of snow, and a bitter wailing blast, that made the windows rattle in their casements. Still the sad-faced woman stitched on.

"Mother," piped a slender voice from the cot beneath the window, "shall you get the fine dress done? O mother, I'm so hungry, if I could only have some tea, and a bit o' sausage"

The mother worked on steadily for a few moments, pausing only to brush a tear from her white cheek, then she arose, and shook out the glittering robe.

"'Tis done at last," she said; "now mother's poor little girl can have her supper, only be patient a little longer, Flora. Ross, Ross, where are you, my boy?"

A manly little fellow came out from the little bedroom beyond.

"The fine dress is done, Ross," said his mother, "and you must run home with it as fast as ever you can. Miss Garcia will be out of patience, I know. Tell her I couldn't finish it one moment sooner, and ask her to give you the money. We must have it to-night. And you can stop in at Mr. Ray's as you come back, and buy some coal, and we must have some bread, and tea, and a mite of butter, and you must get a sausage, Ross, for poor little Flora."

"I'll get 'em all, mother," he said, "and be back in no time. You shall have a big sausage, little sis," he added, turning towards the cot.

The little girl nodded her curly head, and her great wistful eyes sparkled with delight.

"And you shall have half of it, Ross," she piped, in her slender bird-voice.

"Haden't you better put on your thick jacket, my boy?" continued "his mother; "the wind cuts like a knife."

"Pshaw, little mother! I don't mind the wind." And away he went, down the creaking flight of stairs, and out into the storm.

In her splendid mansion on Fifth Avenue,

Miss Garcia Fontenay was in a perfect furor of impatience and anger. Her dear five hundred friends were assembling in the halls below, and her handsome dress had not come home. What did that beggar woman mean by disappointing her? At that moment there was a ring at the door, and a voice in the hall.

"Please tell Miss Garcia my mother could not finish it sooner, and she wants the money to-night."

The servant took up the handsome dress, and the message.

"I'll never give her another stitch of work," cried the angry beauty; "I ought to have had it three hours ago. Here, Fanchon, come and dress me at once, there's not a moment to lose! No, I can't pay to-night, I haven't time. He must call to-morrow."

"But we've no fire, and nothing to eat, and my little sister is sick," called the boy, pushing up the grand stairway.

"Shut that door, Fanchon!" commanded Miss Garcia. And the door was closed in his face.

From her perch at the parlor window, little Pansie watched the whole scene, her violet eyes distended with childish amazement. "Poor little boy," she said, as Ross disappeared down the stairway, "sister Garcia ought to pay him. It must be dreadful to have no fire and nothing to eat."

She stood for a moment, balancing herself on the tip of one dainty foot, her rosebud face grave and reflective; then a sudden thought flooded her blue eyes with sunshine, and snatching something from the table, she darted down the stairs. The servant had just closed the street door, but she fluttered past him like a humming-bird, and opened it. On the step sat Ross, brave little fellow that he was, his face in his hands, sobbing as if his heart would break.

"What's the matter, little boy?" questioned Pansie.

Ross looked up, half believing that the face of an angel looked down upon him through the whirling snowflakes.

"O, I can't go home without the money," he sobbed; "poor mother worked so hard, and little Flora is sick, and so hungry."

Pansie's eyes glittered like stars.

"Here," she said, "do you take this, little boy, and buy her lots o' nice things. 'Tis worth a great deal; papa bought it for my birthday present, but do you take it, and welcome."

She extended her dimpled hands, and something like a shower of falling stars tinkled to the boy's feet. He caught it up in amazement—a necklace of emeralds, lustrous, gleaming things, set in tawny Indian gold.

"No, no!" he cried, running up to where she stood; "I can't take this, take it back."

But Pansie shook her curly head.

"You shall take it!" she commanded, imperiously. "I've lots o' jewels and fine things—run home now, and buy your sister something nice to eat."

She closed the door with a bang, and Ross stood irresolute in the stormy gloom. Should he ring the bell, and return the jewels to Pansie's father, or should he do as she had bidden him? He thought of his mother, and poor hungry little Flora watching wistfully for his return. He could not go back and see them starve. With a sudden feeling of desperation, he thrust the glittering necklace in his bosom, and dashed rapidly down the snowy street.

The gaslights blazed brilliantly in a fashionable jewelry establishment, and its bland proprietor looked down inquiringly on little Ross, as he approached the glittering counter. "Would you like to buy this, sir?"

There was a tremor in the boy's voice as he asked the question, and the hand that held up the emerald necklace shook visibly. The lapidary took the gems, examined them closely for a moment, and then shot a sharp glance at the child.

"See here, sir," he said, presently, his voice stern and commanding, "I want to know how you came by this?"

The boy's clear eyes fell, he flushed and stammered, evidently embarrassed. The jeweller put aside the emeralds, and taking the lad's arm, led him into a small ante-room.

"You are a thief, sir!" he said. "That necklace belongs to Mr. Fontenay; he bought it of me not one month ago. You stole it! You are a thief!"

The little fellow straightened himself, and his brown eyes blazed.

"I am not a thief, sir!" he retorted. "I didn't steal that necklace—a kind little girl gave it to me, and I know it was wrong to

take it, but—but—my mother and sister are starving."

The jeweller hesitated.

"You don't look like a thief," he said; "but I will send for Mr. Fontenay; that will settle the matter at once."

He despatched a messenger accordingly, and Ross sat down in one corner, and sobbed bitterly, as he heard the driving winds, and thought of his mother, and poor hungry little Flora. In half an hour, Mr. Fontenay came, bringing his daughter, little Pansie, with him. The little creature darted in like a humming-bird, her cheeks ablaze, her blue eyes flashing lightning.

"He didn't steal my emeralds!" she cried. "I give 'em to him! I told him to sell 'em and buy bread for his little sister."

Ross rose to his feet, struggling hard to keep back his tears. He put out his little brown hand, which Pansie instantly clasped in both her chubby palms.

"I'm not a thief, sir," he said, at last, addressing Mr. Fontenay; "I never stole in my life. I know it was wrong to take the necklace, but—but—sir, my little sister is sick, and she's starving."

The merchant drew his hand across his eyes.

"You're a manly little fellow," he said, patting the lad's head, "and I do not in the least blame you; but we'll take back Pansie's emeralds, and she shall give you something more available. Here, Pansie, give this to your little friend."

He put a gold piece into Pansie's hand, which she tendered to Ross, with the injunction that he should run straight home, and buy lots o' goodies for his sick sister, a command he was not slow to obey.

"I think we'll not lose sight of the little fellow," continued Mr. Fontenay, as Ross disappeared in the stormy darkness, "shall we, pet? Let's see, what can we do to help him? he's a promising lad, and an honest one, I'm sure. Mr. Lenox, you're in need of an errand boy, why not try him? I wish you would!"

The jeweller consented, to Pansie's great delight, and on the following day, Ross was duly established as errand boy in the fashionable establishment.

Fifteen years after, one blustering March morning, a young man sat behind the counter of a thriving jewelry establishment in one of the northern cities. He was a handsome man, a scholar and a traveller, a man

of taste, intellect and money, for he was junior partner in the firm, which was a prosperous one. But despite all this good fortune, Ross Dunbar was not happy. His mother and little Flora had gone to their long home, and he was utterly alone, without kith or kin in the wide world.

Sitting alone that morning, with the roar of the March winds in his ears, his thoughts went running back to the days of his boyhood—to his mother's humble home. How vivid the past seemed, and how dear and sacred, despite its privations and sorrows! His eyes grew dim, and his heart swelled. All were gone over the river of death, over the wide waters of time and change.

A tender smile softened his sad face as he recalled that stormy night, when he sat sobbing on the steps of Mr. Fontenay's mansion, and little Pansie taking pity on him, dropped him her string of emeralds. Darling little Pansie, the remembrance of her sweet face, as he saw it through the snow-wreaths that night, haunted him constantly. In all the fifteen long years, never for one hour had he forgotten her. But she was gone, lost to him forever!

His reverie was broken by the entrance of a customer, a lady closely cloaked and veiled. She approached the counter, with a jewel-case in her hand.

"Would you buy these, sir?" she asked, simply, in a clear sweet voice that stirred the young man's heart as no other woman's voice had power to do.

He took the casket and unclosed it, and spread out its contents. A watch, exquisite and costly, a diamond ring, one or two rubies, and an emerald necklace. Ross Dunbar barely suppressed a cry of surprise, as his eyes fell upon it. He turned it over with eager trembling fingers, and there on the tawny clasp was the name, the sweet dear name that had lived in his heart for so many long years: "Little Pansie."

"You wish to sell them all?" he asked, striving to steady his voice, and the wild throbbing of his heart.

The lady hesitated an instant, then she put out a slender hand and drew the emeralds towards her.

"I dislike to part with this," she said; "it was my father's gift—and—and—but no matter, take them all, I must have the money."

In her eagerness she had thrown aside her veil, revealing a lily face lit by lustrous sapphire eyes. Ross Dunbar stood silent a mo-

ment, every nerve in his manly frame thrilling with supreme delight. He had found her at last; the one idol of his life.

"They are very fine gems," he said, after a moment, "and I am willing to give you a fair price—suppose we say one thousand dollars, will that do?"

The girl flashed a dazzling glance of glad surprise from beneath her heavy veil.

"So much as that?" she said, tremulously. "You are very kind, sir. O, you cannot know how this money will help me!"

The young man made some polite reply, and proceeded to put aside the jewels, and to draw up a check for the money. The March winds were still blustering without, and the girl shivered, and drew her wraps closer, as she started out.

"Wont you let me run down to the bank for you?" said the jeweller, catching up his hat. "You can play shop lady the while, it wont be but a minute or two."

"But I'm troubling you so," she faltered.

"Not a bit; just take this warm seat, please, you'll not be likely to have any customers." And seating her beside his desk, he took the check and hurried out.

Pansie Fontenay threw back her veil, and leaned her head upon her hand, a puzzled, reflective look on her sweet sad face.

"Where have I seen his face?" she asked herself over and over again. "It is so familiar, who in the world can he be?"

His return broke in upon her meditations, and receiving her money, she hurried away to her humble lodgings.

The following afternoon was even more blustering and stormy; the winds roared, and the sleet beat and tinkled against the windows of the little room in which Pansie and her father sat. Severe misfortune and reverses had reduced them to poverty, and the old man, being an invalid, all the care fell upon Pansie's slender shoulders. She sat busy with her sewing, while her father read aloud from a new book, which she had bought for him with some of the money received for her jewels. Her sweet face was wan and sad, and the future stretched before her hopeless and gloomy.

There was a ring below, and a servant brought up a package for Miss Fontenay. An exquisite bunch of pansies, fragrant and golden-hearted, done up in tissue paper, and attached to them a card bearing the simple words, "Ross Dunbar has not forgotten little Pansie."

Pansie sat amazed for a moment, and then a rich bloom drifted up to her white cheeks.

"O father!" she cried, "I knew him—I knew him! O, we have found Ross at last!"

An instant later, Ross was in the room, clasping her fluttering hands in his, and looking into her blue eyes with a glance that brought the rosy blushes to her face.

And a few weeks later, when the blustering winds were over, and the bluebirds sang in the hedges, and the golden-hearted pansies bloomed on the garden borders, little Pansie became Ross Dunbar's bride, and for his bridal gift he gave her back her string of emeralds.